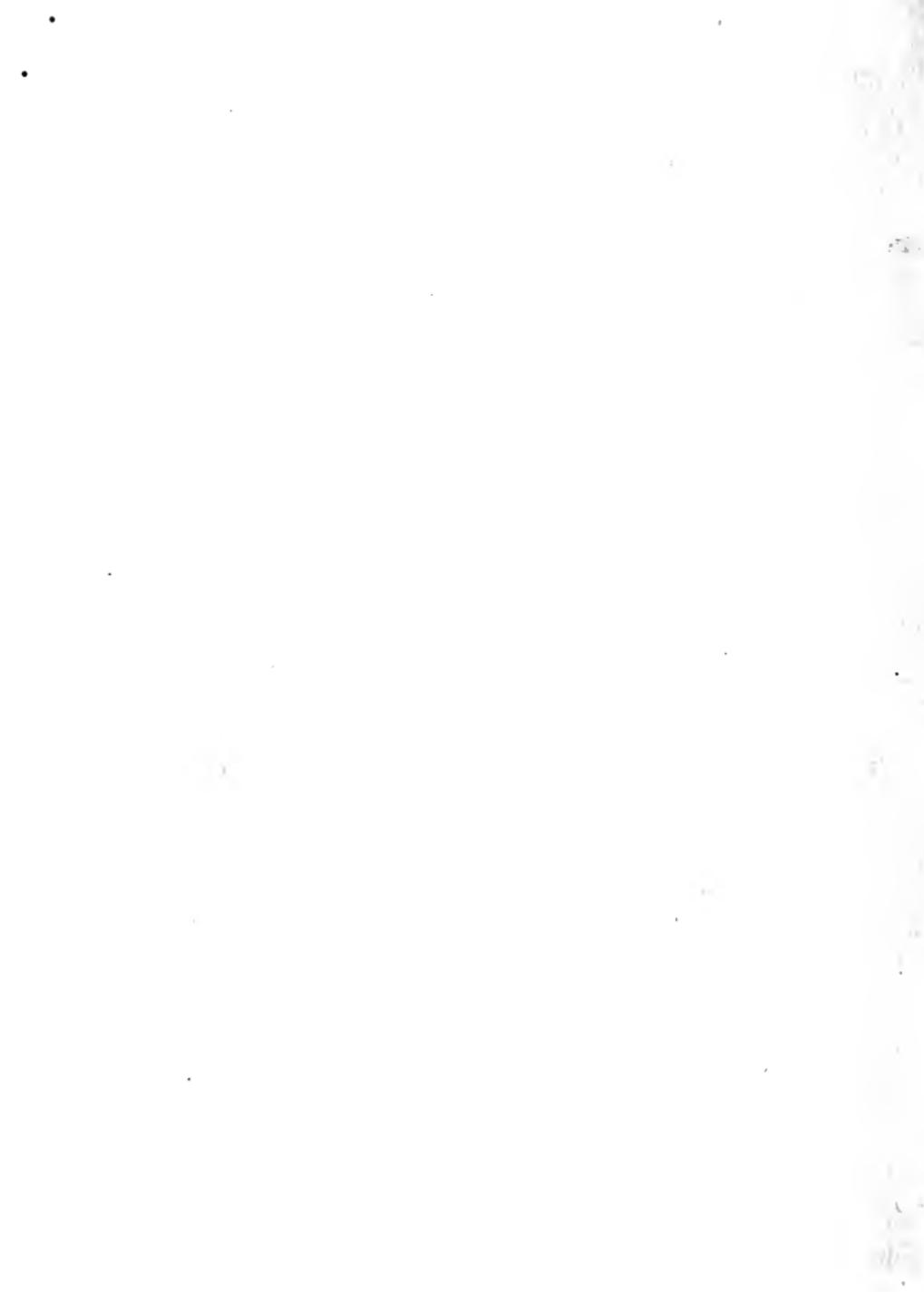


# BIDING HIS TIME

J·T·TROWBRIDGE





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"A CEREMONIOUS BOW FROM THE HAT AND CANE."

# BIDING HIS TIME

OR

ANDREW HAPNELL'S FORTUNE

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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BOSTON:

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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# BIDING HIS TIME.

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## CHAPTER I.

HOW A POOR OHIO BOY HEARD OF A GREAT FORTUNE  
AWAITING HIM IN MASSACHUSETTS.

ANDREW HAPNELL's mother had been two months dead, when one day he took from the post office a letter addressed to her, as if she had been still alive. It gave him a start to see the name once more on an envelope, passed out to him, as of old, from the little window; and it seemed to him for a moment that he was to hasten home and put it into her own dear hands. Then the recollection of his loss came over him like a black wave; and slipping the letter into his pocket, he walked sadly away.

Andrew was a boy of seventeen,—no longer a child nor yet a man,—“betwixt hay and grass,” as the saying is. His mother had kept

him in school, and it had been her intention to give him a good education ; but since she had died, and her pension with her (her husband, a colonel of volunteers, had lost his life in the war), the terrible question had stared the orphan Andrew in the face, What was he going to do ?

He had thought of various things, and he thought of them again now, as he walked home to the house of his married sister, Mrs. Bateman, who gave him food and shelter in those anxious days of waiting. Should he try to work his way through college, and then struggle for a position in one of the crowded professions ? A most discouraging prospect ! Or should he give up that dream, and settle down to some common occupation ? He was willing to do that if he could find the work which seemed adapted to his taste and capacity ; but everything in his future was as yet bewildering and uncertain.

He was a “good, faithful boy,” as his mother had always called him, grateful in her widowhood for so kind and helpful a son. He was

rather awkward in his manners, having long limbs and a shambling gait; and his slowness of speech almost amounted to a drawl. There was nothing very attractive in his appearance, unless you caught the expression of his sunny hazel eyes. They were about as earnest, honest, winning a pair, as ever softened and lighted up a homely face.

Thinking his sister, who was several years older than himself, the proper person to open the letter to their dead mother, he took it to her in the little dining-room, where she was setting the supper table, and put it into her hand. Then he sidled into a chair, in his awkward fashion, and watched to see her expression change as she read the superscription.

“Why! to mother!” she exclaimed, experiencing a sort of shock. Sinking down upon the nearest seat, she tore the envelope, glanced her eye over its contents, and as soon as she could get her voice, read aloud,—

SISTER JANE: I take pen in hand to let you know I am yet in the land of the living, and trust you are enjoying the same blessing. Would make you a visit, but the care of my

large propety keeps me here. Have been prospered beyond expectations, and live in a resdense truly palashal, overlooking Boston and many other cities and towns, with servants to comand.

As I am a bachler, and have no blood relations I care for, I wish you would come and live with me and bring your famly, as there is room for all, and grandchildren if you have any, for I am a lonely old man with more of this world's goods than I know what to do with, and am anxus to use the same for your benefit, remembring how kind your father was to me. If you cannot all come, then send son or dowter, which will provide for and edecate and make my hair or hairess, as I wish none of my blood to inherit of me. My millions is not for such as them.

Sister Jane, I am ernest making this ofer, and trust some if not all can axept, and soon. Don't wait for me to write again, as it is very difkilt for me to hold the pen. Will pay all expences of jorney. Am well known here, and easy found.

Your loving brother,

NATHAN PETRIDGE.

“Uncle Nathan!” exclaimed Mrs. Bateman, in a sort of amused amazement, having finished the scrawl, which was written in a cramped hand, with a poor pen and faded ink, on a half

sheet of dingy letter paper. "I thought he was dead long ago."

"I never knew I had such an uncle," said Andrew, with excited interest.

"You must have heard mother speak of him," she replied, while he reached for the letter and looked it over eagerly. "But he is not really our uncle. He lived in her father's family, a sort of adopted son. But he was always odd, and not very brotherly; and a good deal older than she was. After she married and moved to Ohio, one or two letters passed between them, and then they lost sight of each other. Now the idea of his turning up a millionaire, and inviting us all to go and share his riches! It takes my breath away."

"I remember now!" Andrew murmured, absorbed in thoughts which the strange letter aroused. "She told some funny stories about the things he would do to make money; and how he went barefoot after he got to be a young man, to save the cost of shoes. Well! he seems to have gone barefoot to some purpose! Wonder if he wears shoes now!"

They were still discussing the letter, when his brother-in-law came in; Andrew showed it to him and asked his opinion of it. George Bateman, a rough, brusque, good-humored man of forty, by trade a harness-maker, ran his stiff and blackened fingers through his hair, and replied with a laugh,—

“I think such an offer (with one f!) from an old bachelor with more money than he knows what to do with, ain’t to be sneezed at! Of course, Laura and I can’t accept it, but it’s just the thing for you, Dan!”

“You think so?” said Andrew, with a flush of excitement. “It does seem strange that such a chance should be thrown in my way just at this time!”

“Let Dan go first,” said Laura; “then if everything seems favorable we can pull up stakes here and follow him with the children.”

“I expected that,” laughed her husband. “You are not the woman to sit with hands folded, while ‘resdenses truly palashal’ are waiting for ‘hairs’ and ‘hairesses’ to walk in and take possession. But I shan’t throw up

my business in a hurry; and I advise Dan to make pretty sure old Nate Petridge will do by him what he says, before he risks the journey."

Laura deemed this counsel excellent, and Andrew quite agreed with her. But anticipations of the wonderful change in his life, which the letter proposed, possessed and agitated him, and he could think and talk of nothing else.

## CHAPTER II.

THE PROSPECT OF SUDDEN WEALTH CAUSES A VERY PRETTY FAMILY QUARREL.

THAT very evening he answered the letter in terms suggested by his relatives, informing his "dear uncle" (so he addressed him) of his mother's death, and accepting the invitation for himself, provided the old gentleman should still wish to see him.

"That will give him a chance to write again and send you money for the journey," said his sister.

"And show you how much he is in earnest," added the brother-in-law.

"He's in earnest, fast enough!" said Andrew. "And I don't see why I should wait for him to send me money; I've got enough to get there with, I should think. He says we are not to expect him to write again."

"But he may change his mind when he hears that she is dead," suggested Laura.

"I don't see why he should," Andrew replied, the bare possibility of the old man's retracting his generous offer casting a chill upon his hopes.

"If he does," she added, "you'll wish you had accepted his invitation before he had a chance to take it back."

"That's so," said her husband, in whose brain, also, the idea of a change of fortune was beginning to work. "My business doesn't grow much here; I've often thought I could do better in the East."

"If Uncle Nathan is so well off, and so desirous of benefiting mother's family, I don't see the need of any of us working so hard as we do," Laura chimed in. "Our three children are growing up and it's going to be pretty expensive to clothe and educate them."

"A little help from the old man won't come amiss," said her husband, with an approving nod. "Truth is, for some time now, I've been getting a little mite tired of harness-making. The same thing, over and over again, day after day, and all my days!"

"Dan will look out for our interest," said Laura.

"I should think he might; we've looked out for him pretty well!" chuckled her husband.

This reminder of his debt of gratitude for the hospitalities of the house, since his mother's death, jarred on Andrew's feelings. He would have much preferred that his brother-in-law should add to that debt by remaining nobly silent about it. He was sorry to be forced also to remember that he had done much in return for these hospitalities, by giving his help in the harness-shop and about the house.

"I guess from what he writes, that Uncle Nathan Petridge has got enough for all," remarked Laura. "And Dan isn't the kind of boy to grab more than his share."

"If I thought he was," laughed her husband, "I should be for rushing right in and taking our chances along with him."

"Maybe you'd better," replied Andrew, irritated as much by the laugh as the serious meaning behind it. His sister's remark, too, had

hurt him. " You don't know how much I may grab," he added, with a darkening look.

" Laws, Dan ! " exclaimed George, " I didn't think of making you mad ! I was only joking."

" Mad ? " cried Andrew. " I'm not mad in the least. But when you speak like that, even in joke, I feel that you don't know me. Do you think I wouldn't be just as anxious that Laura and her children should have their share of Uncle Nathan's property as that I should have my own ? and more so ! " he exclaimed, with choking emotion.

" Of course," George answered, more calmly, but flushing, as he thrust his toil-stained fingers through his hair. " I think you would. At least, I think you think you would, now. And I hope you won't change your mind, when you sail in ahead of us, and find living in a ' pala-shal residence ' is kind of nice, and are tempted to forget your humble relatives in Ohio."

" Heavens ! " said the sensitive Andrew, stifling with indignation, as he jumped up from the table where he had been writing, and began to walk the floor.

"Now, Dan! George!" exclaimed Laura, distressed, and yet inclined to laugh. "How ridiculous! beginning to quarrel about the old man's property before"—

"I'm not quarrelling," said George.

"Neither am I," said Andrew. "But nobody likes to be twitted unjustly." He stalked to the entry and took down his hat.

"Are you going out, Dan?" called his sister.

"Yes, I am going to mail my letter."

"I'm sorry you vexed him!" said Laura, after he had gone.

"So am I; and I didn't mean to," replied George. "But don't you see? If he steps in before us, he can have it all his own way with old Nate Petridge's property, and leave us out in the cold, if he takes a notion. I 'most wish we were going too!"

Andrew went straight to the post-office, where he dropped his letter, in order that it might leave by the first eastward-bound mail in the morning; then walked the starlit village streets, to cool off his excitement.

Never before had anything like hard words

passed between him and his brother-in-law. He could not forget the sting of them, which was followed, as is often the way with stings, by a swelling and aching more painful than the first injury.

“As if I might defraud them of their rights!” he said to himself, while his feet rustled along the path, for it was now late in September, and the leaves were beginning to fall. “It seems even she thought of that—my own sister! And he had already hinted at the vast amount they have done for me!”

He was more grieved than angry at the recollection; he could forgive the words, but he could never again feel himself a welcome inmate of his brother-in-law’s house.

On the other hand, the inducements old Nathan Petridge’s letter held out became more and more attractive. Andrew saw himself greeted by a lonely old man in a house which must be to some extent magnificent, if not truly palatial; and imagined, among other luxuries, that of magnanimously securing for his sister’s family their full share of the Petridge estate.

He thought of these things until he burned with impatience to be off, and it seemed no longer possible for him to wait for another letter. Why, indeed, should he wait?

"I'll start to-morrow!" he suddenly exclaimed, as he turned and walked back to his brother-in-law's house.

## CHAPTER III.

### ANDREW SETS OFF IN SEARCH OF HIS FORTUNE.

LAURA and her husband were not sorry, on the whole, to hear of Andrew's determination, when he announced it to them the next morning. They were almost as eager as he was to learn something definite about the wealth to be inherited ; although, to be consistent, George repeated his original advice, that Dan should make sure of what he was to gain, before risking the journey. He also wished to be able to say afterwards, in case the adventure should not turn out well, "It wouldn't have happened, if you had only heard to me !"

Andrew made hasty preparations for the momentous change in his life, putting on his best suit, and taking with him only such clothing as could be packed in a little red valise that had been his father's. Laura and George agreed with him that, if he was going to roll in

wealth, he might as well leave his old suits behind.

He took leave of them in brotherly fashion ; the slight misunderstanding of the evening before having been put out of memory by the momentous event of his departure. George entertained for him a genuine liking and goodwill, and, not simply because he deemed it especially important to keep on the right side of him now, he offered to lend him money.

But Andrew felt sure he had enough for the journey, and did not anticipate needing more at the end of it. Then Laura came forward with something which she put into his hand as he stood holding his valise at the door.

“A letter she wrote to you only a few days before she died. She said you would soon be going out into the world, and I was to give it to you then.”

It was carefully sealed. Andrew glanced at the back of it, and read, in his mother’s well-known handwriting :—

“*To my dear son Andrew, my last written words, to be read and pondered after I am gone.*”

His face flushed, his lips quivered, and thrusting the letter into his pocket, he turned hurriedly away; his brother-in-law, who had left his work to see him off, following and offering to carry his valise to the train.

Andrew made the journey to Boston without mishap. There, notwithstanding the bewilderment of finding himself alone in a great, strange city, he learned, by diligent inquiry, aided by careful reference to the address given in Nathan Petridge's letter, that the old man could probably be reached by one of the horse-car routes, a few miles out of town.

He got into a car, and watched the sights by the way with as much interest as his anxiety regarding the result of his adventure would permit. He had thought of it with many misgivings since he left his Ohio home, and his bosom swelled with intensified doubts and hopes as he neared the end of his trip. A half-hour's ride brought him to the street which the conductor told him to take, and he stepped, with his little red valise, from the platform of the car.

## CHAPTER IV.

A CLUB FLUNG INTO A CHESTNUT TREE PRODUCES SURPRISING RESULTS.

No doubt if old Nathan had known of his coming, he would have had a carriage waiting for him there. As it was, Andrew wondered whether or not he ought to take a hack, in order to reach so fine a house in fitting style; but no hack was in sight, and after staring around him for a few moments, he started to walk up the street.

“Keep right on up the hill; you can’t miss it,” said a man gathering pears in a garden, of whom Andrew made inquiries. “It’s pretty conspicuous.”

It was a quiet street, with pleasant residences not too near together. These, however, as he advanced, grew more scattered, and the grounds about them at last gave place to open fields.

Near the summit of the hill he paused again to look about him. Behind him stretched what seemed an almost interminable village, from the foot of the acclivity, huddling to a city on one side, which, he said to himself, must be Cambridge, and on the other extending, with broken intervals, to a more distant and still greater city, rising to a dome-crowned hill, which he knew was Boston.

Then there was gleaming water in the landscape, flying trains trailing their vaporous flags, here and there trees in their autumnal tints in the foreground, and blue hills rising, still and beautiful and villa-crowned, in the distance. A hazy curtain of smoke and mist hung over all, warmed by an afternoon sun.

Andrew was enraptured by the sight, so different from anything he had ever seen, and he exclaimed aloud: "What a splendid view! What a fine situation for a rich man's residence!"

He was thinking of his uncle's palatial house, which he had expected to find crowning the crest of the hill. Dwellings, in fact, appeared,

clustered along the farther slope, but not one of much magnificence, and he found it necessary once more to make inquiries for the Petridge mansion.

The nearest house was a little back from the street, which ran through a deep cut across the summit of the hill. This cut had left the lot on which stood the house, high and desolate, with the front fence undermined here and there by the caving earth, and threatening to tumble down into the highway.

Easy approach to it had been cut off by the grading, but Andrew noticed a rough footpath worn in the face of the bank, and scrambled up by it to the ruined fence.

Stooping under the rail, the palings from which had been removed, he found himself in an extensive dooryard, overgrown with grass and weeds. In the rear stood a little old house, with pigweeds growing to the very door. There was no path leading to it, and the place seemed so wholly uninhabited that Andrew turned away, thinking it useless to pursue his inquiries there.

But instead of descending the bank by the path, he passed on to a large circular space where the grass and weeds were well trodden around a solitary towering chestnut tree. Burrs and leaves, with clubs and stones, and other missiles, covered the ground, and a little way off a dilapidated dry-goods box, which had evidently at one time served as a coal-bin, stood on end.

This was, in fact, a sort of sentry-box; the opening of which being on the farther side, Andrew did not notice a skinny little old man crouching within, grasping a thick cane, and grimacing with malice as he peeped through a crack in the upturned bottom of the box.

Passing along, valise in hand, Andrew kicked the leaves and burrs under his feet, and picked up a chestnut. He cracked it in his teeth, and suddenly remembered that he was hungry. He next took up one of the clubs, that had probably done like service for more than one adventurous boy, and sent it on an errand to the top of the tree.

It went crashing into a thick bough, on the

outer edge of which the brown nuts could be seen clinging in clusters to the open burrs, and brought a number rattling and thumping to the ground.

But as Andrew advanced with a quick step to pick them up, the little old man rushed out of his box, screaming and brandishing his cane.

"I've got ye this time! Surrender! surrender!" and the little old man seized him by the collar with one claw-like hand, while the other still poised the menacing staff.

"What am I to surrender for?" asked the astonished boy.

"For trespassing on my land! For stealing chestnuts!" screamed the little old man.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SKINNY LITTLE OLD MAN GIVES OUR HERO AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF INFORMATION.

ANDREW was quite as much amazed as frightened by the apparition of his strange assailant dashing out and capturing him in that abrupt fashion. He dodged the cane, which was shaken unpleasantly near his nose, and grasped the wrist of the hand that held his collar.

“Why don’t you try to get away?” said the little old man, in an angry, high-pitched voice. “Why didn’t you run away like all the rest of ‘em?”

“I saw no reason for running,” Andrew replied, looking down on his captor with wondering, candid eyes. “I didn’t know they were your chestnuts.”

“You knew they were somebody’s!” panted the little old man, with failing voice and breath, while he trembled from head to foot with excitement.

"I suppose they are somebody's," Andrew replied, "and if I had known anybody lived here, I wouldn't have touched 'em. Why don't you have a sign — NO TRESPASSING?"

"That's just what I have, but the boys pull it off from the tree and fling it away, and then come for chestnuts, and pretend they don't know they are trespassing. I never could catch one before, they run so."

"Well, you've caught me. What are you going to do with me?" Andrew inquired.

"That's just it!" replied the little old man. His hand shook so that it had fairly shaken itself off the boy's collar, and so far from brandishing his cane, he was now leaning on it for support. "I don't know what to do with a boy that don't run, nor try to get away."

"I'll tell you what you'd better do," said Andrew.

"What's that?" said the little old man.

"Let me go," said Andrew.

"Give me something! Pay ransom!" said the little old man, with gleaming eyes.

"How much?" Andrew asked.

"A hundred dollars!" ejaculated the little old man.

"That seems an enormous ransom," said Andrew. "If I was a prince or a millionaire — but I haven't a tenth part of a hundred dollars in the world!"

"Your relatives have!" retorted the little old man. "Come, they'll pay that and more, rather than see you go to jail."

"Go to jail?" Andrew gave his captor a dry, discouraging smile. Though barely seventeen, he was almost head and shoulders taller than his captor, who seemed a mere squeaking pigmy beside him.

"Yes, I'll drag you there!"

"You'll drag me?" Andrew spoke with a good-natured drawl, and grinned down at the little old man. "I'm afraid you'd find it pretty hard dragging."

"Give me twenty-five cents!" cried the eager little old man.

There was something so ludicrous in this sudden collapse in his demand for ransom, that Andrew, though harrassed and vexed, and

anxious to be on his way, was obliged to laugh.

"No, I won't give even that—I might be cheating you. I have only one relative who has money, and I am on my way to his house now. I'll lay the case before him, and what he says you ought to have, you shall have."

"Who is he?" demanded the little old man.

"Nathan Petridge," replied Andrew. "I came in here to inquire for his house; that's what brought me inside your fence—if you call that a fence."

"Nathan Petridge!" squeaked the little old man.

"Yes; why not? You may not believe it, but Nathan Petridge—you must know him, for he lives somewhere on this hill—is my uncle. Or, if not exactly my uncle"—

"Nathan Petridge!" again gasped the little old man. "I'm Nathan Petridge myself!"

## CHAPTER VI.

HOW ANDREW WAS WELCOMED AND ENTERTAINED AT  
THE PETRIDGE MANSION.

ANDREW turned pale with momentary astonished incredulity.

“And who are you?” cried the little old man. “I don’t know! I don’t know anything! I thought — where do you live?” Andrew asked, recovering from his stupor, and trying to think the *dénouement* of his romance might not be so bad as it appeared.

“I live here,” said Nathan Petridge, pointing with his heavy cane to the house behind the pigweeds.

“That is your palatial residence!” said Andrew, looking over the old man’s head with a strange, glassy, despairing smile. “Well,” after a pause, with trembling lips and in a husky voice, “then I don’t see anything left for me to do but to turn around and go back to Ohio!”

But all at once the thought occurred to him that he had no money to go back with.

"To Ohio!" echoed Nathan Petridge. "You come from Ohio?"

"All the way from Ohio, in answer to your letter to my mother!" said Andrew, burning with wrath and mortification, as he began to realize what his folly had led to. "What did you mean by writing such a letter as that?"

"I've written no letter! I never write letters!" Nathan Petridge replied.

"Then somebody has written in your name," said Andrew. "Look here!" taking the letter from his pocket. "Do you know anything about this?"

"Yes, yes! that's what I wrote to Jane Hapnell, she that was a Boynton! And it's true. There's room for all."

"Where?" Andrew demanded.

"In my house," said the old man, with ridiculous conceit. "I've more of a house than you think. Come in! Come in! Welcome to the Petridge mansion!"

He was bareheaded, his hat having fallen off

when he rushed out of his sentry-box. He wore no linen, and in place of a cravat an indescribable old rag was twisted about his shrivelled neck. He had a thin beard, which showed his unwholesome skin under it; and he was sallow and wrinkled as a dried pea. His grimacing smile, and bows and flourishes of excessive politeness, astonished the ungainly lad who stood staring at him, even more than his previous rude onset.

"So, Jane Hapnell is your mother? Jane Boynton that was!" The old man turned to pick up his hat, which he set on the head of his stout cane instead of his own bald pate. "Jabez Boynton was her father—a good friend of mine; he gave me my start in life. But come! no more ceremony! once for all!"

Thereupon he caused his cane, with the hat upon it, to bow low before his visitor, as he backed away toward the house. Andrew would hardly have understood that this was to be regarded as an act of courtesy, had not the old man, as he walked on before him, frequently turned and made the hatted staff do the bow.

ing, very fantastically, while he repeated his hospitable invitations.

It was a much-battered and shapeless hat; quite in keeping with the old man's tattered clothing and shoes trodden down at the heel. Andrew followed wonderingly, half-inclined to laugh, and half to cry with disappointment and heaviness of heart.

"I may as well stop and see how he lives, anyway," he said to himself; "and whether he's crazy or a fool."

"Tarry here," said the old man, having led the way through the pigweeds to the front door, "while I go around and unlock from the inside. We usually," he added, "reserve this entrance for state occasions." And with a final ceremonious bow from the hat and cane, he disappeared around the corner of the house.

Andrew stood holding his little red valise, and winking hard as if to make himself realize where he was and what was happening, when presently was heard the sound of feet clattering along a bare floor within, followed by the grating of a rusty lock or bolt. Then the bow-

ing hat reappeared in the open door, with the smiling old man behind it.

"It's the plague of servants," said Nathan, apologetically, "that they are never on hand when wanted. I maintain three, and have to wait on myself. This is the vestibule," he explained, showing the boy into a barren entry: "and here is my suite of apartments."

Andrew found himself in a room of good size, but dingy and desolate. The windows were cobwebbed and curtainless; and paper-hangings of a very old and faded pattern, with roses as big as cabbages, covered the walls in streaks and spots only, leaving much of the smoky and grimy plastering exposed.

There was a tumbled bed in one corner, a small cooking-stove in another, and a rickety pine table on one side, besides two decrepit chairs, with worn splint bottoms, mended by crossed and knotted cords.

"Will you enter the library or the drawing-room?" said old Nathan, ushering the lad along with his bowing cane. "Everything, as you see, is on a magnificent scale, and an entirely new plan."

He proudly pointed at the floor, which was curiously portioned off into rectangular spaces by lengths of coarse twine stretched across.

“There, you see, is the culinary department, in other words, kitchen, which you will always know by the stove being in it. The dining-room is adjoining, indicated by the table. Now we are in the library, and now”—he hopped over one of the lengths of string—“I am in the drawing-room. See how ingenious and very convenient it is!”

He stood eyeing his visitor with a pleased and triumphant simplicity, which puzzled and astonished him more and more.

“Here! set your valise in the library,” the old man went on. “I regret the absence of my servants: Benjamin, the butler and bottle-washer; Thomas, the chief cook and steward, and Susan and Mary, the maids”—Andrew noticed that his three servants had grown to four,—“all gallivanting somewhere, just as distinguished company has arrived. Have you had supper?”

“Nothing but a couple of chestnuts, which

didn't agree with me," Andrew answered dryly. He had no thought of prolonging his visit to the old man an hour; yet he sank down mechanically in one of the mended splint-bottomed chairs.

"Lobster salad, veal cutlet, chicken fricassee,—which shall it be?" old Nathan asked, with smiling hospitality. "Speak the word."

To see what he would do, Andrew answered: "If it's all one to you, I'll say chicken fricassee."

"Chicken fricassee!" repeated the old man, his smile becoming thoughtful. "I declare, I believe that rascally steward has gone off and left the larder empty. And I'm afraid you'd find it irksome waiting for him to return and cook your supper. But I'm bound to entertain you while you are here. Will you do me a favor?"

Without waiting for a reply, he thrust a hand into his pocket, and went on:

"Go to the bakeshop on the corner of the next street below, and buy a five-cent loaf of bread; and to the grocery opposite and invest

for me two cents in smoked herrings. And, in honor of your arrival, three cents for a pint of milk. Or don't you care for milk? I guess we can dispense with the milk," he added, as he counted out some pennies on the table. "Seven cents will do as well as ten. A penny saved is a penny earned!" And with a shrewd smile he dropped the change which remained in his hand back into his pocket.

"In your letter, you boast of your millions," Andrew could not forbear reminding him.

"But I don't carry millions in my breeches pockets," the old man answered, shrewdly. "I may have herds of cattle and yet be bothered if you ask me for a beefsteak. I have wealth! I have wealth!" he added, gleefully. "But I am beset by robbers, and have to be careful. That's why I sent for Sister Jane and her family."

"I don't see what we can do for you," Andrew answered, stern and gloomy, in his chagrin and indignation.

"You don't see? I'll tell you!" Old Nathan sat down in the drawing-room and talked with

Andrew in the library, over the dividing string. He set his cane on the floor and leaned forward upon it.

"I have relatives that are trying, by fair means or foul, generally foul, to possess themselves of my property. But I am too much for them!" and the old man showed his gums and three or four scattered stubs of front teeth with a grotesque grin. "I'll tell you about it."

Andrew was intending, every moment, to leave that wretched place and that strange old man; yet he stayed on.

The sun had by this time gone down, and the room, its scanty furniture, the plastered walls with their still adhering patches of paper, the floor with its whimsical twine partitions, and the old man leaning forward on his cane, all took on the gloom of the sudden twilight, while a deeper gloom fell upon the spirit of the bewildered boy.

## CHAPTER VII.

ANDREW MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER, AND LEARNS MORE OF THE STRANGE OLD MAN.

THE old man in the parlor hitched his chair a little nearer Andrew in the library, showing a proper respect for the string partition, which he was careful never to put his foot upon, and proceeded to explain,—

“ My own blood relations ! Solomon Burge and his family. Solomon Burge is my nephew, my own sister’s son. He got himself appointed my guardian on the ground that I was insane ! Did you ever hear anything like it ? ” cried Nathan. “ Do I show the slightest symptoms of unsoundness here ? ” tapping his forehead.

As Andrew made no answer, he went on,—

“ They even clapped me into a hospital ; but they couldn’t lay hands on my money, after all. I’d put that where they couldn’t find it ; and as they had my expenses to pay, they was glad

to take me out again ; they dropped me like a hot potater ! Now what I want is somebody to stand between me and them. So I thought of Jane. And how is she ? I believe it is thirty year since I've seen Sister Jane, she that was a Boynton."

" Then you haven't received my letter, written the night before I started ? " said Andrew.

" I've received no letter ; I never receive letters , " answered the old man.

Andrew hardly thought it worth while to explain to him that his mother was dead. With a heavy heart, miserably irresolute, he took up his valise and rose to depart.

" Here's the money ; don't go without the money , " said the old man, adding further directions for finding the bakehouse.

" I'm not going for the bread ; I don't care for any supper , " said Andrew.

" Don't care for supper ? " cried the old man, with a hopeful gleam. " Then one smoked herring will answer . " He dropped another of the pennies back into his ragged trousers.

"But you may get the loaf; we shall want breakfast."

With a wretchedly hollow feeling at heart, Andrew was moving toward the door, when he suddenly changed his mind. "I'll get the loaf and the smoked herring for *you*," he said, thinking the errands would afford him an opportunity to make inquiries regarding the old man.

"You'll leave your valise?" cried Nathan, hesitating before putting the money into his hand. Andrew smiled drearily, and to show that he had no intention of running away with the loaf and smoked herring, he yielded the valise.

He went out through an empty shed in the rear of the house, and found himself again on the open hill-top. This proved to be a dome-like crest of a few acres, surrounded by steep sides, where it was in process of cutting down to a much lower grade to make room for village streets, an innovation which, it was evident, would soon undermine the Petridge house itself, and sweep it into oblivion. It

stood there, as it were on an island, under the crumbling cliffs of which the sea of a more modern civilization was fast encroaching, and it was probably this fate awaiting it which had caused it to be left in its neglected condition, in the possession of so strange an occupant.

It was a relief to Andrew to breathe once more the outer air. A delicious coolness had fallen upon the earth. The fragrance peculiar to autumn evenings floated up with the mist from the valley. A tranquil sunset flamed in the western sky.

He scrambled down the caving bank, in the direction of a populous part of the town behind the hill, and found his way to the bakehouse. He looked in, hoping to see a man with whom he could have some talk about Mr. Petridge. Finding only a young girl, and being a bashful boy, he would have gone away again if he had not remembered the loaf he had come for.

The girl was lighting a kerosene lamp at a desk behind a row of glass cases containing a tempting array of cakes and tarts and pies.

By the glow it shed upon her brow and hair, he saw that she had a round, fresh face, with large, laughing eyes, and a charming little turned-up nose. He hardly knew whether the lamp or her pleasant features gave the more light. If not exactly smiling, they seemed ever on the point of breaking into a smile.

The smile came when he advanced to the counter, and, resting his closed hand on the glass case, asked for a five-cent loaf. He was lank and shy; he spoke with a peculiar drawl; it was plain enough that he was a stranger in the place. The loaf was produced and wrapped in brown paper, and the closed hand dropped its rattling pennies on the glass case.

“Anything else?” she said, her pretty inflection and her pert nose turning up at him with frank good-nature.

“It is for Mr. Petridge,” he said, as he hesitatingly drew his purchase toward him.

“Is he sick again?” she asked. “I haven’t seen him for a week.”

Andrew was ready to pour out his troubles to any one who would listen to him. He stood

leaning awkwardly against the counter, his eyes were downcast upon his loaf, and there was a convulsive movement in his throat before he spoke. She had a laughing nature, ever ready to ripple over at the slightest provocation, but the sight of his emotion sobered her.

"I don't know whether he is sick," he replied, "but something is the matter with him. What is it?"

"Oh, he's crazy!" she said. "Not very bad. He harms nobody."

"He has harmed me!" said Andrew, out of the fulness of his heart. "I've come all the way from Ohio on his invitation. He wrote that he was rich, and living in style."

"That's his hobby," the girl replied. She kept a serious countenance, in view of his distress, but now and then her habitual laugh would flash out like summer lightning in an evening sky. Andrew forgot his diffidence; he stood holding the loaf under his arm, and turned his honest, earnest eyes full upon her.

"Has he really any property?" he asked.

"That's a mystery," she replied. "Some think he is a miser, and has heaps of money. He manages somehow to buy his bread and cheese."

"I don't know what to think," said Andrew, sorely perplexed. He told more of his unhappy story, and asked, "Is there a place near here where I can get supper and lodging, not very expensive?"

She was directing him to a restaurant, when a stoutish woman, with a full, florid, amiable face, entered from a passage beyond the desk, bringing a broad tray of hot rolls in her plump arms.

"Ma, just think!" exclaimed the girl. "Mr. Petridge wrote to this young man's folks in the West, pretending to be awfully rich, and offering them a home; and he has come hundreds of miles to see him, and now he don't know what to do!"

The woman questioned him with motherly interest, and exclaimed: "He's as miserable a human being as I know anywhere! The idea of *his* taking care of his connections! What he

needs is somebody to take care of *him*. If any of his friends had come from the West with *that* purpose, I should be thankful."

"Don't his relatives here do anything for him?" asked Andrew.

"About all they do is to plague and pester him, in the notion that he has money, which they're afraid he'll lose or give away."



ANDREW IN THE BAKESHOP.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. PETRIDGE HAS A DEATH-BED SECRET TO IMPART TO HIS NEPHEW, BUT CONCLUDES NOT TO DIE.

YEARNING for advice and comfort, Andrew would have been glad to talk further with the friendly mother and daughter, but they were obliged to attend to other customers coming in. They seemed quite to forget his presence; the girl was laughing and chatting as if there were no such wretch in existence, and he went off, with his misery and his loaf.

He was ashamed to buy only one herring at the grocer's, so he called for half-a-dozen, using some of his own money to complete the purchase. Then he hurried back to the old house on the hill.

Harassed in mind as he was, he couldn't help stopping to wonder at the scene which met his gaze from the top. The cities and towns he had beheld before were now more dimly

outlined in the evening mists and shades, but everywhere shone lights in homes and streets, thick as stars in the sky ; some near, some far and faint, some hazily reflected in water, like rows of lamps on a bridge. At the same time, the dull, distant, muffled roar of life came to him, wafted on the cool, damp air. What a vast, busy, lonely, preoccupied, tumultuous world it was to the soul of the solitary boy !

His future was darker than the night, but the first step to be taken was clear in his mind ; to give the old man his loaf and his herrings, take instant leave of him, and seek his own supper and lodging elsewhere.

Approaching the door with this determination, he heard appalling sounds within. All was dark, and, in his fright, Andrew was on the point of dropping his bundles and running away.

But the sounds were undoubtedly human groans, and his conscience would not let him run. He paused under the empty shed, lifted the latch of the house door noiselessly, listened a moment longer, thrilled to the soul by a

louder groan than the rest, then resolutely went in.

The sounds proceeded from the corner of the room where the bed was, and there, in the deep gloom, Andrew found the old man convulsed with pain, his hands clenched and his knees drawn up.

"What is the matter?" he asked, bending anxiously over him.

"One of my spasms," replied the old man, between his groans. "The worst I ever had! It will kill me this time."

"What — how — where is the pain?" Andrew had by this time forgotten his own fears, in his terrified sympathy for the old man.

"They told me at the hospital it was the stomach, but it's the heart! I know it's the heart! Don't take that!"

Andrew was about to remove some object which seemed to be in the way of the sufferer's convulsive writhing, for he was constantly hitting it. It proved to be the old man's cane, which lay beside him on the bed.

"Let me set it in the corner," said Andrew.

"No, no, leave it be!" The old man clutched it wildly with both hands. "It's my only defence against *them!*"

"Who?" said Andrew.

"Robbers! My relations! Them that would tear my heart out to get my money. If I die — boy, boy, hear me!"

One bony hand released its hold of the cane, in order to clutch Andrew's arm.

"Hear my last words! If I die, don't let them touch a penny of it! not a penny!"

"How can I help it? I don't know where your money is."

"I'll tell you!" said the old man. "Put down your head; even the walls have ears. Promise that you will be faithful; not to leave me till I'm"—

Here his difficult utterance ended in another wild spasm.

"What can I do for you?" asked Andrew.

"Nothing. The fit has to take its course. Another such wrench will end me. Ah, and I haven't told you!"

"Tell me," said Andrew, putting down his ear so as not to lose a word.

"I've been a lifetime saving it up, and now if it should fall into their hands, I couldn't sleep in my grave. It shall all be yours, every cent; only stay by me! Don't forsake a dying old man!"

"I won't leave you." Nathan Petridge now lay stretched out upon the bed, breathing heavily, but free from his agonizing cramps. "I'm waiting to hear you," Andrew added, with intense curiosity.

"Ah, yes; you shall know before I die., But as death seemed to have relaxed his grip for a time, the old man clung to his precious secret. "So you are really the son of Sister Jane? You shall have it, in trust for her, every dollar! Only promise again! Don't leave me to die alone!"

"Certainly I will not! There must be something I can do. Let me strike a light."

"Yes, yes! There's matches in the oyster-shell on the mantelpiece."

Andrew found them, struck one, and lit a kerosene lamp which stood on the table. He turned, and by the dim light looked at the piti-

ful figure, now drawn up in a heap, on the tossed bed.

"You need some nourishing food, some warm drink," he said.

"It is too late," replied Nathan. "I've had nothing but chestnuts and a couple of apples for three days. If I had only biled 'em! And then the excitement of meeting you! Your hands!"

Andrew sat down on the bed, and gave the old man his hands, which he held quietly for a few minutes, and then wrung spasmodically through another convulsion.

"Let me call a doctor, won't you?" said Andrew.

"No, no! doctors charge like thunder, and their medicines are pizen. Turn down the lamp a little; no need of burning so much oil."

Andrew was glad of an occasion to withdraw his hands from the old man's clutch. But hardly had he reduced the flame of the lamp sufficiently, when the sick man called him back to the bedside.

"You are Sister Jane's own boy; I will make

your fortune and hers. Don't leave me an instant, but watch me closely, and let me know if I am going to die, so I can tell you"—

His voice became inaudible, his limbs relaxed, his eyes closed ; and it was in vain that Andrew, who thought he might be dying, exhorted him to tell his secret. His breathing became more regular, his hard, dry features grew moist, and his tight hold of the boy gradually loosened. The old man was asleep.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE STRANGE SITUATION IN WHICH ANDREW READ OVER  
AGAIN HIS MOTHER'S LETTER.

ANDREW withdrew his hands, with a sigh of relief; he took his eyes from the sickly, aged, emaciated face, and glanced about the dismal room, trying to realize his extraordinary situation. He hardly dared move; it seemed terrible for him to remain in that awful silence, broken only by the sleeper's heavy breathing, and yet he could not go away.

Who would have believed that he would remain an hour in that house, after learning how shamefully he had been deluded? And yet here he was, a night-watcher by the bedside of a miserable, sick, and insane old man.

Doubts and questions crowded upon his excited brain. It seemed to him that Mr. Petridge must have a hidden hoard somewhere; but when he glanced down at the floor, with its ridiculous string partitions, in strange con-

trast with the reality of pain and misery there present, the old man's boasted riches appeared as phantasmal as the palatial residence to which Sister Jane and her family had been invited.

"I wish he would wake up, so I can go and get my supper," thought Andrew. "I wonder if I ought to break my promise and leave him?"

He was faint with hunger; for the truth was, he had not only had no supper, but his dinner had been postponed in anticipation of the entertainment awaiting him at the Petridge mansion. He looked askance at the package of smoked herrings, and the white loaf bursting out of its brown wrapper, where he had placed them on the table. Presently he reached for the bread and broke off a piece, which he munched with relish, enlivened by the flavor of one of the herrings.

A good part of the loaf and four of the herrings went to allay the cravings of the healthy boy's appetite; and he regretted that he had not also bought the milk the old man at first so generously proposed. He remembered see-

ing a pump in the rear of the house, the thought of which preyed upon him, and made him so thirsty that he finally got up on tiptoe, and started in search of water. He found a broken-nosed pitcher on a pantry shelf, and starting out of the back door with it, he tried the pump. A few strokes brought the cold water from the well splashing upon the wooden platform ; he filled the broken-nosed pitcher, and lifted it dripping to his lips.

He drank, and then holding the pitcher in both hands, paused to look about him and think. Never afterward could he forget that moment at the well. A thousand lights twinkled ; over Boston hung an immense luminous haze, and farther to the east beamed a more effulgent glory. It was the rising moon, swelling up red and huge from the horizon, — Andrew did not know that the sea was there, — and shooting its watery beams through fog-drifts and city-smokes, over innumerable roofs, to the spot where he stood. It touched the old pump on its rotting platform ; a dilapidated trellis projecting half-way over it, like a ruined arbor,

from the shed at the end of the house ; and the house itself, so gloomy and silent, with its strange inmate.

“ How odd that I am here ! ” Andrew thought ; and his mind went back with lightning speed to the afternoon when he had left his Ohio home, and his sister had put a certain letter into his hand.

The rumor of his going East, to take advantage of a great fortune offered him, had spread quickly through the village, and a troop of young friends had come to the railroad station to see him off. He remembered how proudly conscious he was of being admired and envied by them then ; how they had begged him to write to them, as if it would be a great condescension on his part, and waved their hats and handkerchiefs to him looking back, as he rode away on the platform of his car.

How would he be regarded by those envious admirers if he should return to them now ? He imagined their derisive greetings ; and he could hear his kind but blunt-speaking brother-in-law’s exasperating “ I told you so ! ” But out of all

these images rose one more distinct than the rest ; his mother's letter.

He had read it more than once, and not without emotion, after getting away from familiar scenes and faces, on the flying railroad train ; but his mind had been too full of anticipations of a brilliant future, to take in all its tender and deep significance. Amidst his ruined hopes, in the solitude of that night on the hill, in the rays of the red moon, the desire rose within him to read again those last words written by the dying hand.

He went back softly into the house. The old man lay quiet, but muttering in his sleep. The room was filled with a disagreeable odor from the lamp, which Andrew had hardly perceived before going out into the fresh evening air. He turned up the sulking light into a more cheerful flame, and taking the letter from his breast pocket, sat down with it by the table.

He unfolded it now with far different sensations from those with which he had first opened it. Then it was full of the sacred, almost too-

painful memories of the past. It was now a comforter and counsellor in time of trouble.

His eyes, as he read, were more than once blinded by unshed tears, before he came to these words :—

“ O my son, I pray you always to remember that an upright, manly character is to be prized above honors and riches. When I think of this I am reconciled to what would otherwise be a grief to me, that I shall leave you a poor boy, with your living to earn by hard work. That work, if you accept it cheerfully, will be better for you than wealth. I should dread to know that you were to come into possession of great riches.

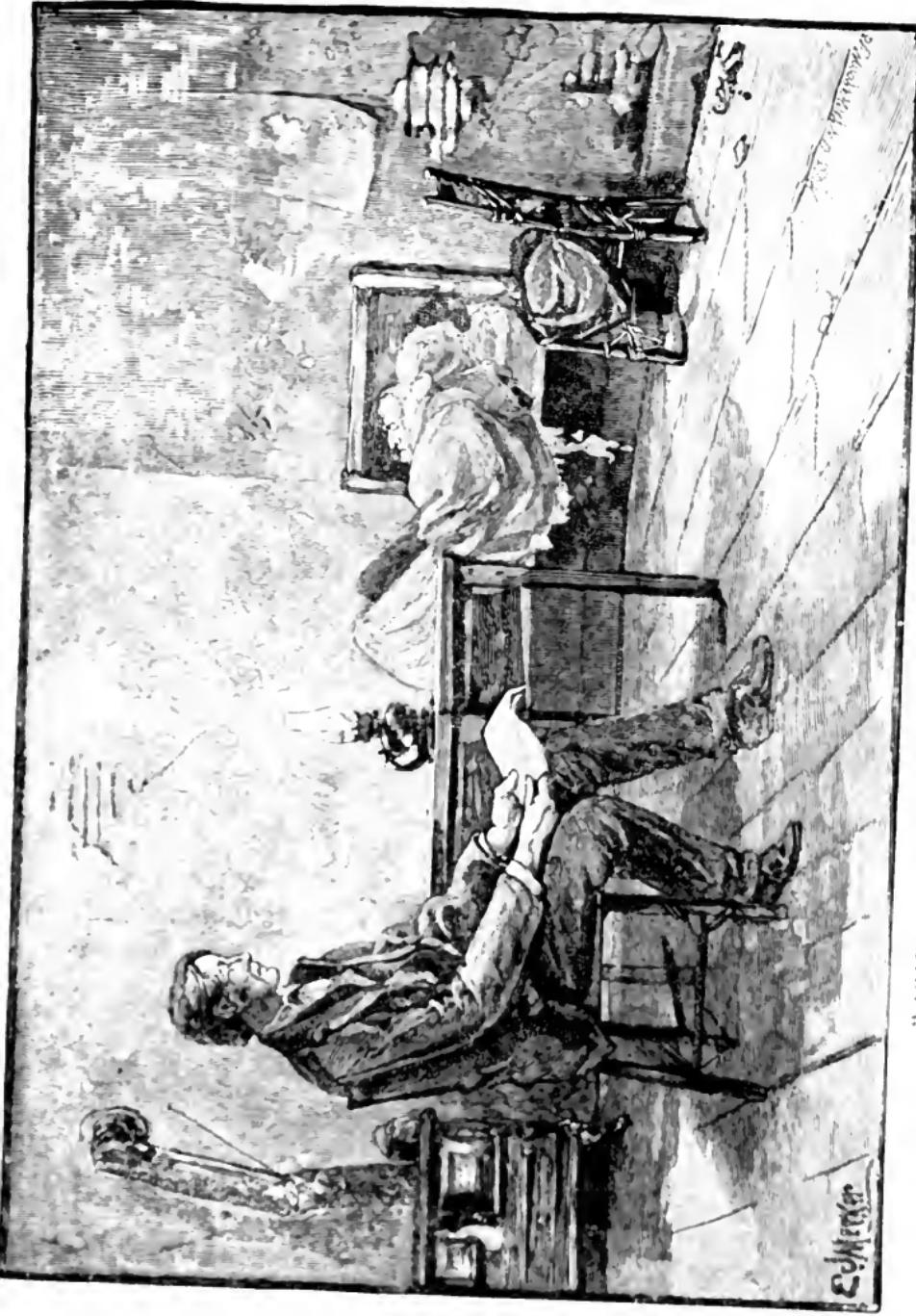
“ I trust you will achieve a competence, but do not be anxious about it, and, O my son, do not try to acquire it in haste. Be contented to get on slowly in paths of patient industry, enjoying each day, helping others, doing always the present duty, and biding your time.

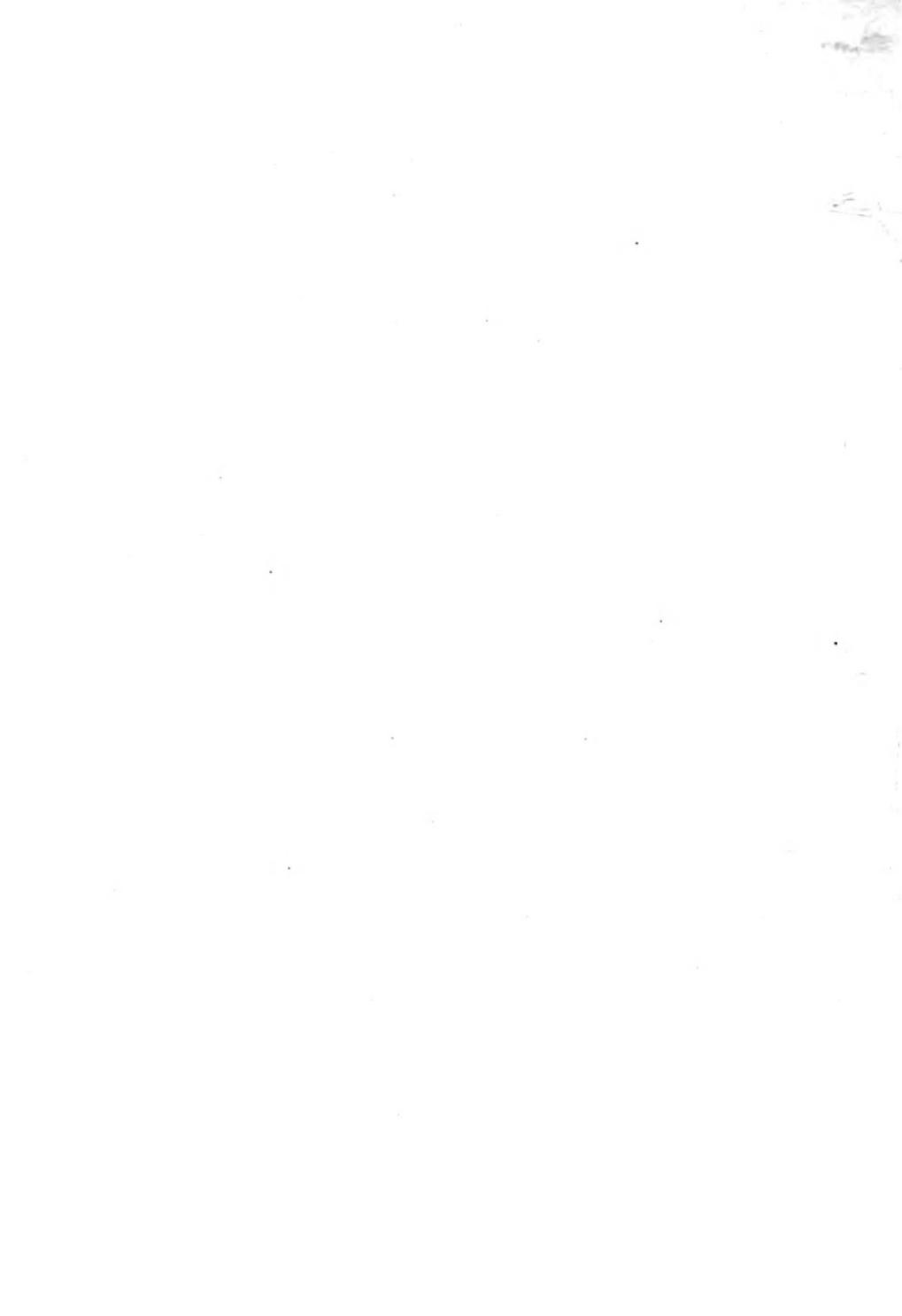
“ Take that as your watchword. Accept no pleasure nor advantage before it is rightfully yours. In hours of grief and trial, do not lose

"AGAIN AND AGAIN THE BOY READ THOSE WORDS." Page 65.

Illustration by  
John R. Neill

E. W. H.





heart. All doubt, all evil will pass away, and all good things come round to you in due season, if you are brave and faithful, and bide your time."

Again and again the boy read those words, and sat and pondered them, with his hands fallen with the letter upon his knees, and his eyes looking far beyond the dingy walls of that lonely room, into the world of thoughts those feebly traced lines called up.

"I'll do it!" he said, at last, with fervent lips, "I'll do my duty, if I can find out what it is, and bide my time."

## CHAPTER X.

HOW IT CHANCED THAT THE BAKER'S WIFE CARRIED A  
BROTH TO THE OLD MISER.

ADJOINING the bakery were the living rooms of the house; there the baker's family were at their cosey breakfast the next morning, when a servant, left in charge of the shop, announced,—

“A lanky young chap wants to see ‘the woman.’ I guess he must mean you, Mrs. Wilbur.”

“It’s that ridiculous tall boy from Ohio!” exclaimed Phronie, the daughter, with fun and sympathy flashing up in her vivacious face. “I must go with you, ma; he’s as good as a play.”

The “ridiculous tall boy” it was indeed, looking haggard and worn, as he stood with his hands in his pockets gazing down at the pies and cakes in the glass cases. Mrs. Wilbur

scrutinized him keenly, and asked how he got on with the old man.

"I'm afraid he's pretty sick," said Andrew. "He had several dying spells in the night. He pulled through and slept, but he's so weak this morning he can't get up. He won't have a doctor, and I don't know what to do. I thought maybe you could tell me."

"Pretty rough on you, my boy!" said the baker's wife.

"There wasn't so much fun in it as there might be. I've passed better nights," Andrew said, with so dry a drawl and with so solemn a countenance that Phronie, watching him from behind the counter, with eyes full of pathetic interest, burst into a giggle.

Mrs. Wilbur gave her a chiding look, and asked, turning to Andrew, "What are you going to do?"

"That's what I'd like to know," he replied. "I can't leave him, and I don't see how I can stay. An old man and his cudgel aren't the best company in the world. He even sleeps with his club, for fear of robbers. I believe

he's starved. He needs something to eat besides baker's bread and smoked herrings. No disrespect to your bread!" he hastened to add.

"I know what he wants!" exclaimed the baker's wife. "It isn't the best baker's bread in or about Boston, which may be ours or some other shop's; that's neither here nor there. It's a good, warm, nourishing broth, and that he shall have, if I turn to and make it myself."

"If you will," said Andrew, gratefully, "I will pay you for it."

"I don't want your pay!" she replied, fretfully. "If anybody pays for it, it shall be the old miser. It puts me out of all manner of patience to see a human creature treat himself as he does!"

Andrew made his own breakfast of hot rolls and a piece of Washington pie, while the broth was preparing. He walked about as he ate, thinking intently, but having no unnecessary conversation with the girl, whose tittering had wounded his pride. He couldn't help looking at her now and then, however, and almost

every time he did so, he caught her watching him with large, bright, wistful, sympathizing eyes.

The baker's wife brought out the broth in a quart pail from the living part of the house, and Andrew noticed that she had on her bonnet and shawl.

"I guess I'd better go up with you," she said, "and see if anything else can be done for Mr. Petridge." She was glad of an excuse to look in and see how the old man lived; she had heard so much about his oddities, his miserliness, and the string partitions on his floor. But she had a worthier motive at heart.

"It's heathenish to leave neighbors to suffer and die alone, no matter who or what they are."

As Andrew went out with her, Phronie's eyes still followed him, looking as if she would like to go too.

"What a place to climb!" said the baker's wife, as Andrew helped her up the easiest ascent of the steep hill-top. "Modern improvement!" she panted, out of breath with the exertion. "It's a good thing, I suppose,

but it seems a pity to cut away the old fortifications."

"What old fortifications?" Andrew inquired. He had already noticed behind Nathan's lot a curious low, zigzag embankment, overgrown with grass.

"Those are the old earthworks. They date back to Revolutionary times and the siege of Boston," replied the baker's wife. "The American forces threw them up when they occupied the height after the battle of Bunker Hill, or what was called by mistake 'Bunker Hill.' That isn't far off; where the monument stands, over in Charlestown."

He had observed the soaring granite shaft, and wondered what it was. He had read his country's history with a boy's patriotic fervor, and this information awakened in him a new interest.

But now the condition of the old man required his attention. They found him lying on his bed, with his clothes on, which he had lain down in the night before, and with his cudgel by his side. He made an attempt to

rise, on hearing footsteps and voices enter, but sank down again from exhaustion.

"I beg pardon!" he grimaced. "This is not the way to receive a lady. If my servants were not playing truant! I vow, I'll discharge all five of 'em! Show her into the library, or drawing-room, or"—

"Bother his library and drawing-room and five servants!" muttered the baker's wife, looking about her with a thrifty housekeeper's scowl of amazement. "Have you a bowl for this broth?"

Mr. Petridge ate ravenously, and smacked his shrivelled lips as he lay back on the bed. Then Mrs. Wilbur looked over the house with Andrew. They found a scantily furnished pantry, and, upstairs, a low-roofed attic, with bare boards overhead and rusty shingle-nails sticking through, a chimney at one end, and a window at the other.

The most interesting discovery was a bed under the rafters, with a husk mattress and a bolster.

"Dry as need be," the baker's wife ex-

claimed, thrusting her hand into the tick, "thanks to the sun on the roof! This will be just the thing for you, if you stay with him, and I don't see how he can be left alone, at least for a day or two. Maybe I can manage to spare you a pair of sheets and a bed-quilt, and make you comfortable in other ways. If you were a girl now, I'd set you to cleaning up his house a little."

"Perhaps I might do it as it is," said Andrew, not very well pleased with the prospect.

"If possible, I'll let one of my servant girls come up and help you," Mrs. Wilbur replied, as they returned to the room below. "You'll want some cloths to wash windows with; I wonder if he has anything to make a fire with?"

"I've burnt a few chestnut-burrs lately," piped the old miser from his pillow.

"Chestnut fiddlesticks!" said the baker's wife. "Is that all the fuel you have?"

"The clubs the boys bring to fling into the tree. And the fence, the palings on the fence," said the old man.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER PAYS THE "RIDICULOUS, TALL BOY" A COMPLIMENT, AND SHOWS HIM HOW TO WASH WINDOWS.

TELLING Andrew she would have some things ready for him, if he would come down to the bakehouse in half an hour, Mrs. Wilbur departed. He then found a battered axe, broke up some of the fence with it, started a fire, and put on a kettle of water to warm. This done, he looked down with a sad grin at the string partitions ; they must come up the first thing.

The old man remonstrated shrilly when, having found a hammer, Andrew began to pull the nails out of the floor ; but he persisted, declaring that it was confusing for him to live in so many rooms at once, and that if the partitions remained, he would have to go. This brought the old man to terms ; the strings were removed, and the floor swept.

So much accomplished, Andrew started to go for the things Mrs. Wilbur had promised him. At the top of the path leading down the caved bank he met a young girl climbing up. It was Phronie, bringing a scrubbing-brush and rags. She turned up at him her pert little nose, and broke into a gay laugh as he helped her up the bank.

"Ma couldn't spare a girl for an hour or two, so she said I might come and bring these things, and show you how to wash windows if you want to make a start. Won't it be fun?"

Andrew had not regarded it as fun up to this moment. Although by no means a lazy boy, he had generally found work in which he was not specially interested more or less irksome. For that reason it had been hard for him, since his mother's death, to settle down to any steady employment; he was waiting for something he was sure to like.

But since reading over her letter the night before, he had resolved to do cheerfully the first plain duty that came to his hand. That seemed to be to make old Nathan a little more

decent and comfortable during the short time he remained with him.

"I don't feel that I owe him anything," he said, talking with Phronie on their way to the house; "but I came here willing that he should take care of me. Then why shouldn't I do what little I can for him?"

"I think you are very forgiving," Phronie said, "after his fooling you so."

"I was a fool to be fooled by him," Andrew replied. "I don't know why I shouldn't forgive him."

She looked up at him archly. "And have you forgiven me?" The dimples about her mouth were like the folded petals of a laugh, just ready to open.

"For what?" Andrew asked; and yet he knew.

"For tittering at something you said this morning," she replied, the laugh flashing out. "It was very wicked in me; but do you know, you've the funniest way of speaking sometimes! I suppose it's a kind of Western drawl."

"It's not a Western drawl; it's *my* drawl," said Andrew. "You may laugh at it. I know I'm a gawky."

"Oh, no, you're not that!" she assured him, suppressing her risibility. "Only a little—I don't know what—queer."

He blushed to the tips of his ears, which, by the way, were large, and stood out from his head like a small pair of wings. He wished for a moment he could make some sharp criticism upon her in return; but his resentment was short-lived.

"Tell me how I'm queer," he said, "and try to improve me. I'm only a green Ohio boy, anyway."

"Do you want to know just what I think?" she cried, with her bright, round, arch, tender, merry face beaming up at him. She was rather short, and her pretty head, with its inverted bird's-nest of a small bonnet (the fashion of the day) came up only to his shoulder.

"Yes, tell me!" he said, holding himself firm, prepared to hear the worst.

"When we get a little better acquainted,"

she replied. "I don't care, though; I'll tell you now. I think you are as honest as the day is long, and as good-hearted as you can be."

There was something besides mere fun in the face that said this. He laughed, too, with relief and pleasure, and said, "That's worth coming all the way from Ohio to hear."

"Didn't anybody ever compliment you before?"

"I guess not. I never was very popular at home till the news got around that I was to be adopted by a millionaire. Then I had popularity enough in one day to last a lifetime." He added, with a rueful smile, "I wonder how popular I shall be if I go back now!"

"But you are not going back!" said Phronie.

"I don't know," he replied, his countenance clouding. "What else can I do? But I mustn't think of that; I shall go as crazy as Uncle Nathan if I do."

"Do you call him *uncle*? I thought he was no relation."

"He isn't. But I was ready enough to call

him *uncle* when I thought he was going to enrich me, and I ought not to be ashamed to do so now. That's my window up there," he said, pointing to the attic. "It has one good thing, a splendid outlook."

"What a lovely hill it is, or used to be!" exclaimed Phronie. "I've often been up here to see the sunsets, or the steam-trains going out in the early morning, on all the roads — oh, it's superb!"

They entered the house, where Andrew brushed down the cobwebs while she dusted the window sashes. She then showed him how the panes were to be cleaned and rubbed, setting the example with her own hands, which she proudly declared were not afraid of work. She had put up her sleeves and pinned back her skirt, and he had taken off his coat.

Having become reconciled to the innovation, old Nathan chuckled with glee to see the work going on. Suddenly she exclaimed, peering through a pane she was rubbing: "There's somebody at the chestnut tree! the Burge boys!"

## CHAPTER XII.

INTRODUCES ANDREW, AND THE READER, TO SOME NOT  
VERY AGREEABLE NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

THE old man clutched his cane, and started up in great excitement.

“I’ll attend to them,” said Andrew. “Only give me authority to drive ‘em away.”

“It’s the tribe that’s trying to get my money!” cried the old man, reeling back upon the bed. “I’ll have ‘em prosecuted!”

“Are they really his relatives?” Andrew inquired, as Phronie followed him out through the shed, where he paused to put on his coat.

“Their father is his nephew,” she replied, trying to keep him back. “They’re a bad lot. Better have nothing to do with ‘em.”

He stepped forward, rather reluctantly, it must be owned, and passed the corner of the house. Seeing three young fellows,—two of them almost full-grown men—clubbing the chestnut tree, he asked them, with his dry

drawl, if they were aware that they were trespassing.

"What business is it of yours?" said the youngest of the three, a saucy-faced boy of fifteen, while the others continued to pick up the nuts their last clubs had brought down.

"Mr. Petridge has sent me to warn you off," replied Andrew.

"And who are you?" cried the second of the three brothers, caricaturing Andrew's drawl.

"I'm taking care of him just now," said Andrew, turning very red. "He says if you don't leave he'll have you prosecuted."

Thereupon the oldest of the three, stooping to pick up a chestnut, took up a club instead. He was tall and athletic, with an insolent face looking out from under a slouched felt hat. He did not hurl the club into the tree, but held it at his side, while he took a menacing stride toward Andrew.

"I heard of you," he said, with his under jaw out and canted a little to one side, with insulting arrogance, heightened by a sidelong

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look out of his half-shut eyes. "You've come to get the old lunatic's money. You're welcome! But none of your impudence with me! I'll let this club drive at your head if you open it again and let out any of your sass!"

Andrew, who had been very red, now turned pale, even to his ears, which seemed to stand out from his head more like wings than ever. A natural impulse caused him to step behind old Nathan's sentry-box, but he did not stoop. Standing head and shoulders above that convenient breastwork, he answered, steadily,—

"You can throw your club at me if you choose to. That will only go to show that you are not far from what he says you are."

"What's that?" said the tall swaggerer.

"You know yourselves what you are," replied Andrew, "coming here to rob an old man's chestnut tree the minute you hear he's sick! Why don't you come when he's out with that big cane of his?"

"Ned Burge, don't you throw that!" cried

Phronie, running up just as the club was raised to threaten or to hurl. "You'll get yourself into a worse scrape than you ever did yet!"

"Did ye think I was going to hit him?" returned Ned. "I've as much right here as anybody. Chestnuts are free, wherever you find 'em."

"Not if the owner forbids trespassing," said Andrew. "You've had warning!"

"The old man can't bring a suit. He'd have to get his guardian to bring it for him, and that's my father," said Ned.

"What are you here for, Phronie Wilbur?" called out the second of the Burge brothers, with good-natured familiarity. "I should think you might be in better company."

"I should think *you* might be in better business, Sol Burge! I know how you found out Mr. Petridge was sick. I'm here to do something for him, while *you*!"—the sentence closed with a look of unutterable disdain.

The marauders did not throw any more clubs, but, after picking up a few nuts by

way of bravado, went off munching them, and disappeared over the bank. Andrew remained with Phronie, to pick up the chestnuts left on the ground.

"How did they know I had come, and that the old man was sick?" he asked.

"They got it of Lem Gorbett, one of our drivers. Lem would be a pretty good fellow, if it wasn't for just such bad company as the Burge boys. I should think you would have been afraid!"

"I was afraid," said Andrew, with his dryest intonations. "But I wasn't going to be scared out of my wits by 'em. Now, let me try a club."

"Oh, isn't this perfectly delightful!" cried Phronie, as the nuts came rattling to the ground. "I should like nothing better than to stay and pick up chestnuts all the forenoon; but I must be going home now."

"Must you?" said Andrew, regretfully. "Cleaning windows won't be half so interesting without your help."

It was, in fact, a disagreeable task. He

hated the feeling of the wet rags, and he couldn't help spattering his clothes. Still he kept on, leaving his work only to attend to the wants of the querulous old man. Had he come all the way from Ohio for this?

## CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH MISER NATHAN PRODUCES SOME OF HIS MAGIC MONEY.

MRS. WILBUR was in no haste to send up the servant; considering, perhaps, from Phronie's account of Andrew, that he could do the work without assistance. By noon he was tired and hungry; and it seemed to him time, not only to think of dinner, but also to learn something definite regarding the old man's resources.

"You'll impoverish me!" groaned Nathan, when Andrew, having got ten cents from him, asked for more.

"Then your riches are all a sham!" said Andrew.

"No, no!" Mr. Petridge protested. "But they are put out of the way; tied up; salted down. You know what that is."

"I only know that you'll have to untie

some of them, if you mean to keep out of the poorhouse," said Andrew, standing by the bed and looking dejectedly at the dime in his palm. "I've no money to speak of, and Mrs. Wilbur isn't going to give you a broth every day."

"Since you insist," said the old man, bringing up a few cents more from the depths of his pocket, as he lay on the bed. "But don't be extravagant; don't spend everything, because I give up and trust you."

"Everything!" cried Andrew. "Come, if I am to stay till you get better, I must know just what you have to live on."

"I didn't think you had come to rob me like my blood relations!" Nathan complained, as little by little he emptied his tattered pockets, in each of which was some small change, amounting to less than a dollar in all.

"So, this is your immense wealth!" said Andrew, convinced that he had no more on his person, whatever his hidden hoards might be.

"All I have at command, every cent! I'm

like a man with a whole herd of cattle, and not a beefsteak." Old Nathan gave a crafty chuckle as he made use of his favorite comparison.

"Where do you keep your money, if you really have any?" Andrew demanded. "You promised last night to tell me."

"I'll tell you, when I get to know you better," the old man replied, with a sickly, fawning smile; "when I learn to have confidence in you. Then you shall wallow in cash; literally wallow!"

"I don't ask to wallow in it," said Andrew. "But, seriously,"—pressing the paltry sum in his hand,—"this won't do! If you have money salted down, as you say, you must take a little out of the brine. Is it anywhere in the house?"

"No, no; not anywhere in the house!" the old man hastened to declare. "Don't think of looking for it, Nephew Andrew! You'll spoil everything. It's magic money, and you don't know the right hocus-pocus."

"Then I may as well take my valise and go!"

exclaimed Andrew. "Here, I don't want any of your small change." He flung the jingling handful indignantly down upon the bed, and started for the attic, where he had left his valise.

Whether as crazy or not on some points as he appeared, Nathan Petridge was sane enough to perceive that Andrew's stay with him had been prolonged on account of his own helpless condition, and he had taken advantage of the discovery. It was pleasant for him to lie and be waited upon, and to see the lonesomeness of the old house relieved by the presence of so tall and strong and useful a "nephew."

He was, no doubt, weak enough that morning, until Mrs. Wilbur's broth revived him. When surprised by the announcement that the Burge boys were at his chestnut tree, he inadvertently betrayed some returning strength, but quickly, upon a little reflection, fell back upon his bed again. Better lose the chestnuts than his nephew.

Now, however, there seemed to be danger of

losing the nephew anyway ; he could hear his footsteps ascending the carpetless stairs and treading on the bare boards overhead. He sprang out of bed, tiptoed in his stockings across the floor, listened a moment at the foot of the stairs, and then stole back into the room with a chuckling laugh, as if he had made up his mind to do a cunning thing.

If Andrew really meant to carry out his threat of leaving him, he thought better of it the moment he was alone. Pity quickly succeeded to impatience ; and he felt he must, at least, remain until Nathan Petridge was on his feet again. And now the old man began to call loudly in the room below.

“ See ! ” he cried, gleefully, holding up something in his skinny fingers as Andrew went down to him.

It was a bank note, an unrumpled dollar bill, so fresh and new that it could hardly have been carried long concealed about his tattered clothing.

“ Stay with me, nephew mine ! ” he said, with a fond smile. “ Stay till I’m able to

go out and visit my bank, and you shall wade in bank bills; you shall stand in bank bills and greenbacks up to your eyes and ears! I tell you, it's magic money!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE BAKER, THE BAKERY, AND THE BAKER'S SMALL ASSISTANT.

"WELL, how are you getting on up there?" the baker's wife inquired, as Andrew entered the shop on the afternoon of the following day.

"Pretty well, I think," he replied, casting his eyes about wistfully for Phronie, who was not present. "I've done about all I can for Mr. Petridge just now. It isn't necessary for me to be with him all the time, and I—I've been wondering whether you haven't some work I can do to pay you for your kindness to us both."

"Oh, bless me," she cried, tears coming into her eyes, "don't speak of pay! I've been glad to do the old man a neighborly turn, and I've done by you only as I'd have anybody else do by a boy of mine."

"I'd like to do some work for you," he insisted. "I don't care what it is; errands, or anything."

As she looked at him, it suddenly occurred to her that the greatest blessing she could confer upon this friendless, forlorn boy would be to give him some employment.

"I shall have to consult my husband," she said, something which she seemed rather reluctant to do.

The truth was, Mr. Wilbur was not so benevolent a person as his wife, and what she and Phronie had already done for Andrew and old Nathan had caused a domestic cloud. "Leaving me and the shop," he muttered, "to carry broths and things to an old miser, and to do favors for a perfect stranger, who may be an impostor, for aught we know!"

He had not yet seen Andrew, however, and Mrs. Wilbur hoped he might be more charitably disposed toward him when he should come to know what a well-meaning boy he undoubtedly was. He ought at least to be mollified by Andrew's offer to work for benefits received.

"This way," she said, after some hesitation.  
"I'll see what he says."

They found Mr. Wilbur at his long, bench-like table, before a window in the back shop; he was bent over a loaf of cake, which he was covering with a coat of white paste, spread on with a knife. The low ceiling was blackened with smoke from the ovens, and covered with flies, and flies were so thick about the loaf he was frosting that he had to use some adroitness to avoid imbedding them in the sweet paste. It was the season of the year which drives flies into houses, and the warmth and odor of the bakery attracted them in swarms.

"This is the young man I spoke to you about," Mrs. Wilbur said to her husband. "He would like any little job of work to pay for what we have done for him and Mr. Petridge."

The baker gave Andrew a glance, and without a word, went on with his frosting. Having coated well his cake, he began to mark it off into narrow parallelograms with the edge of his knife.

"They want it in rather thin slices. I forgot to tell you," said his wife.

Still he made no reply, but went on with his marking. Andrew tried to forget his embarrassment in watching the baker's work. Having covered the cake with two rows of parallelograms, divided by a single stroke of his knife down the middle, each parallelogram representing a future slice, he took from a shelf a short, thick, brass instrument, like a small syringe, and filled it with his white paste.

"He'll speak to you in a minute," the baker's wife said, encouragingly, to Andrew. "I must go back into the front shop."

The baker had an assistant, a boy about twelve years old, who was picking over some raisins at the farther end of the table, slyly tossing one now and then into his mouth after Mrs. Wilbur had gone out. Andrew filled up his time by watching the two. He also took a deliberate survey of the shop, the great kneading-troughs, the wooden trays, the iron pans, the empty barrels, and the general aspect of flour, which encrusted almost everything,

from the baker's apron and overalls to the small brass scales and weights standing before him on the table.

At a muttered command from the man, the boy threw open one of the ovens, under the wide, low arch of which, dimly lighted by the glow of an unseen fire, appeared a group of long, black pans, full of white rolls. The baker left his cake to look in at them critically; then taking down from under the ceiling a long-handled, oar-shaped wooden shovel, called a "peel," he thrust the broad blade under one of the pans, and drew it toward him along the smoothly worn fire-brick floor.

He examined the rolls more carefully at the oven's mouth, then shoved the pan back into its place, leaving them to take on a somewhat browner complexion, and returned to his cake.

The boy shut the iron door with a loud clang, and strutting after his master, shook his small fist with comical defiance behind his back, at the same time giving Andrew five or six very rapid and very knowing winks.

Noticing that Andrew's attention was di-

verted, the baker turned, and would have caught the urchin in the very act of making fun of him if the boy, with a motion almost as swift as one of his winks, had not assumed a serious business air, and returned demurely to his raisins.

## CHAPTER XV.

HOW ANDREW, IN A VERY HUMBLE WAY, OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT.

THE baker, apparently forgetful of Andrew's presence, proceeded with the ornamentation of his loaf. Pressing the handle of his syringe-like frosting-machine, and causing a thin stream of the paste to exude, like a small white worm, he dabbed it on in little coils and curls, crossing and recrossing the cake.

At last, without looking up, he spoke, but not to Andrew.

"Got 'em all sorted?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, in a perfectly respectful tone of voice, making at the same time an impishly derisive face, for Andrew's edification, over the baker's bent back.

"Now grease these pans."

"Yes, sir," very deferentially, and, passing behind his master, the boy made a motion of

kicking him over his table and out of the window. As the baker was a well-built man, of considerable breadth of timber, and the boy rather small even for his years, the ludicrousness of the suggestion made Andrew laugh, in spite of the distressing awkwardness of his situation. He coughed to disguise his merriment, and spoke to account naturally for his cough.

"As you are pretty busy, perhaps I had better not wait."

"What was it you wanted?" said the baker. Andrew explained. "What can you do?"

"Almost any common job of work," said Andrew.

"Can you do what he is doing?" Mr. Wilbur referred to the boy, who, at that moment, was performing a series of perfectly frightful contortions of countenance, expressive of his opinion of somebody, accompanying them with pointed flings of his brush-handle in the direction of the worthy baker.

Taking it for granted that the question did not relate to the boy's antics, but to the more

useful exercise of his talents in painting the inside of the pans with the contents of a grease-pot, Andrew answered confidently, "I think I could learn to do that."

"Could you pick over raisins without eating the plumpest you came across?"

"I think I could do it without eating any at all."

"Then you could do better than Ike here," said the baker, with a glum sort of humor. "This wedding-cake has got to go to Cambridge in the morning; can you deliver it?"

"I'm not acquainted in Cambridge, but I guess I could find my way," said Andrew.

"Yes, and how do I know you wouldn't eat the cake, and never find your way back again?" said the baker.

"Maybe it wouldn't be safe to trust me with anything so tempting as that," Andrew replied, thinking he might as well treat such a suggestion with levity. "But I might saw and get in this pile of wood out here."

"No danger of your eating that, eh?" said the baker, with a twinkle of the eye, turned

up quickly at his visitor, with a more amicable expression. "Well, come around here in the morning, and we'll see."

What Andrew had secretly hoped for, when he first offered his services to Mrs. Wilbur, now came to pass. He acquitted himself so creditably in the wood-cutting that other jobs were given him, and instead of working merely to pay for past favors, he found himself earning something more.

The business of the bakery was increasing, and such help as a willing and intelligent lad could render came, as Mrs. Wilbur declared, "right handy." He did errands, and learned the geography of the town; he was not only trusted to deliver important orders, including wedding-cake and other delicacies, but even, upon occasions, to keep the front shop, make sales, and receive money.

At first, he obtained his own and old Nathan's food chiefly at the bakery, receiving it in return for his work. Often Mrs. Wilbur gave him a bit of steak for his own breakfast, or a dish of soup at dinner, with something

"warm and comforting" to carry home to the old man. Then he was made happy by being given a seat at the family table.

Meanwhile, he found it very convenient to lodge at Mr. Petridge's. He became attached to his attic room, and even conceived a sort of liking for the old man. Nathan gradually recovered from his bedridden condition, as he saw Andrew settle down, with apparent content, to his new way of living. He seemed to regard his nephew, as he delighted to call him, with great affection, as well he might, considering his dependence upon him, his own money being all gone, and his feeble health preventing him — so he persisted — from visiting his bank.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHY THE BURGE BOYS BROKE INTO AND RANSACKED  
OLD NATHAN'S HOUSE IN HIS ABSENCE.

ONE day — he had occasion afterwards to remember that it was the first day of November — Andrew went up to carry the old man a plate of pudding from Mrs. Wilbur's table, and was surprised, as he approached, to hear strange noises in the house.

Very different they were from those which had alarmed him on the evening when he went in and found old Nathan groaning with pain. There was a noise of pounding.

“What is he up to now?” he wondered, and was at first inclined to think the old man, having burnt up his fences, was beginning to make firewood of the house itself. But there were voices within, not at all like old Nathan's. In fact, old Nathan was not there at all; he had disappeared since morning, and in his place

were two strapping young fellows, hard at work, with their coats off, tearing up the shed floor.

Andrew came upon them suddenly, and watched them for a few moments from the door before they were aware of his presence.

"If it ain't here, then I don't know where it is," said one of them. "These are the only loose boards I can find."

"I don't believe it's in the house at all," said the other. "But we'll make sure."

Andrew recognized Ned and Sol Burge, and quickly guessed their errand.

"What are you doing here?" he cried, just as Sol, perceiving him, gave his brother a poke with his foot, while Ned was stooping to rip up a board.

"No harm," said Sol, laughing, with a bold front. "In pursuit of useful knowledge, that's all."

"I know well enough what you're after," replied Andrew; "and if you don't get out of here at once, I'll go straight and call the police."

"Put the boards back," Ned muttered. "It ain't here."

"No, and it isn't anywhere — certainly not anywhere in this house," said Andrew.

"Oh! you've looked for it, yourself, have you?" sneered Ned, with a jerk of his chin, as he looked up from the floor. "I thought as much."

"Yes, I have; I've watched the old man, and I've looked in every place where it would be possible for him to hide his money. But I did it for his own good, not to rob him."

"We're doing it for his good, too," Ned replied, getting up and striking his fingers together to brush off the dust. "Maybe you don't know it, but we are his relations."

"Yes, I know it well enough. But that gives you no right here." Andrew stood holding his plate of pudding covered by a bowl as he spoke. "If you couldn't find his money after you had put him into the hospital, how do you expect to find it now? I tell you, his being rich is just one of his insane notions, and nothing more."

"If you thought that, would you be stopping

with him here?" Ned retorted. "You're no such fool. You are after the same thing we're after. But we have a right to it, and you haven't."

"But don't think we want to steal it," put in Sol. "We only want to find where it is."

"So that you can know whether it will pay to send him to the hospital again," said Andrew. "Where is he now?"

"That's what we'd like to know," Ned answered, with brazen frankness. "He was seen to take a horse-car at the foot of the street, and ride towards Charlestown; but he may have been going through Charlestown to Boston."

"You'd better have followed him; you'd have stood a much better chance of discovering his hidden riches," said Andrew. They did not inform him that their younger brother had gone on that wild-goose chase. But Sol spoke up: "If he has no money, how does he pay his rent?"

"For this house? I don't imagine he has any rent to pay," replied Andrew. "He claims that he owns it, but that he doesn't dare hold

it in his own name for fear of your taking it from him. I suppose the real owner is an old acquaintance who gives him the use of the premises while the hill is being cut down. Nobody else would live here."

" You suppose what's absurd," said Sol, putting on his coat. " We know who owns the house, and he ain't a man to give anybody any rent. Now look here!" addressing Andrew in a confidential and friendly manner, " find out where his money is, if you don't know already, and we'll pay you handsomely for the information."

As Andrew stood amazed at this cool proposal, Ned took up the argument.

" Of course you understand he ain't in a condition of mind to give or will his property away. Father is his legal guardian. He gave us authority to come and search the premises. We've everything in our own hands — only we haven't. Now, you help us, and we'll do the fair thing by you."

" We'll give you what he has no right to give and you've no right to take," Sol added. " If

he should fork out to you a thousand dollars in gold, it would be stealing for you to pocket a dollar of it."

"And it is not stealing for you to come and break into his house, and take anything you can lay your hands on!" Andrew exclaimed, full of amazement and indignation. "I'm glad, for one," he added, "that the property you are worrying about has no existence, if only that you may never get it. As for your bribing me to play into your hands"—he was too angry to go on.

"You mean to stand in our way?" cried Ned. "Then look out!" He gave Andrew a sinister look, with his chin canted and his eyes half shut. "You won't help us?"

"Go!" shouted Andrew, pointing to the shed door. And they went.

He found that the house had been ransacked from top to bottom, and that even the mattress the old man slept on had been ripped open.

"I should think they might be satisfied now!" he exclaimed. "The idea that their father's guardianship over the old man gives

them a right to rummage and plunder in this style!"

They must have got in by discovering the key under the back doorstep, where old Nathan had told Andrew he would hide it, if ever he should leave the house in his absence. The doorstep had been overturned, and the key was in the lock, on the outside of the door.

## CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH, BY A RARE CHANCE, ANDREW ENJOYS A SIGHT OF MORE OF THE OLD MAN'S MONEY.

AFTER putting the house to rights as well as he could, Andrew left the old man's dinner on the table where he would find it, locked the door, replaced the key under the step, and went back to the bakery. At his work, however, Nathan's absence from home continued to trouble him. He could not wait till night to relieve his anxiety, but having an errand on the streets about four o'clock, took advantage of it to run up the hill.

He was startled to find a solitary horse and buggy standing in the deep dusk, dark against the yellow earth of the caved bank. He peered into the hood of the carriage, and finding it empty, the horse being fastened by a strap and weight, he went on up the bank.

There was a light in the house ; that was at

least an assurance that Mr. Petridge was there. But who was with him? Andrew, as he drew nigh, could hear him talking in a high, querulous key, which so excited his curiosity that, in passing a window, he stopped to look in.

Himself concealed by the outer shadows, he could see what was going on in the ill-lighted room. On the old pine table the lamp burned dimly. Close by sat a stranger, in a loose over-coat, with a black hat on his head, his left shoulder turned toward the window so that Andrew could see only his side face and thick, gray beard. He sat quietly, with his hand resting on a pile of bank notes, in the full glow of the lamp.

Before him stood old Nathan, talking and gesticulating, with his cane under one arm, and something like a bank note crumpled in his hand.

"It will ruin me!" he was saying. "I have already paid you twice too much."

The stranger said something in a low, decisive tone, and Nathan, with a gesture of despair, threw down his bank note on the table. The



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stranger placed it on his pile, and pressed it down with his broad hand.

"No, no! not another dollar!" cried old Nathan. "You can't be so cruel! I've my nephew on my hands now, and I can't afford it."

The stranger seemed to insist, however; whereupon Mr. Petridge, after much violent protestation, walked abruptly into the back entry. Andrew could not tell whether he remained there, or went into the pantry, or into the shed. After an absence of two or three minutes only, he returned, with another bank note in his hand.

As he was still holding on to it, and begging to be let off, the stranger raised his voice in reply, loud enough to be heard by the boy who stood in the darkness behind the panes.

"Come, Nathan! You know I know you have money enough, I must be going before it gets any darker, or I shall break my neck getting down to where I left my buggy."

"It will be a judgment upon you!" cried old Nathan. "You shouldn't be so ~~inhuman~~ in your treatment of an old friend."

With a hard, dry smile, the stranger rose from the table, and reached out his hand for the last bank note, which old Nathan finally yielded, not without contortions of despair. When all was over, however, he picked up a paper which lay on the table, smiled, and seemed suddenly to recover from his distress. He even took the lamp, in a most obliging way, to show the visitor to the door, where they met Andrew coming in.

"My nephew," said Mr. Petridge, introducing them. "You didn't believe I had such a nephew, but here he stands. Andrew, this is my old friend, Mr. Hanks."

Mr. Hanks was in too great a hurry to stop and talk; he was afraid of the caved bank. Andrew proposed to help him down.

"Excuse me, Mr. Hanks," he said, having accompanied him to the edge of the hill. His voice trembled as he added, "I want to ask you a plain question."

"Very well; anybody can have that privilege," Mr. Hanks replied, with his dry, but not unkindly smile, standing there in the last

gleams of daylight. "Answering is another thing."

"I saw something of what passed just now between you and Mr. Petridge," Andrew resumed.

"Ah!" replied Mr. Hanks, quietly. "Then you saw him give me some money."

"Yes, very much to my surprise!" said Andrew. "I didn't believe he had any."

"It seems he has enough to pay his rent."

"And you"—

"I am the man he pays it to. I am the owner of this confounded hill they are cutting off. He don't pay much, but he can well afford to pay a little, though it's like pulling his eye-teeth—if he had any eye-teeth left to pull. Thank you," as Andrew helped him down to the grade of the highway. "I'm afraid you don't have a very good time living with him in the old house."

"I don't much mind, for my own part. But if he has money he ought to be made to use it for his own comfort. Has he much?"

"Oh dear!" Mr. Hanks replied, laughing at

the boy's earnestness, as he lifted his carriage weight by the strap and put it into the buggy. "That's what some other people are in a stew to find out, and I'm happy to answer, I don't know. Nor where he keeps it, nor anything at all about it, except that he pays his rent twice a year. That's where my interest in his business begins and ends. Good-night, my young friend."

And, settling down comfortably into his buggy, with a heavy lap-robe wrapped about his legs, the owner of the "confounded hill" rode away.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW LEM GORBETT STEPPED DOWN FROM THE BAKER'S WAGON, WHILE HIS SUCCESSOR STEPPED UP.

MR. PETRIDGE remained as poor as ever after this. Paying his rent, he said, had exhausted his ready resources, though he still talked of imaginary millions.

Andrew had learned that argument with a mind so manifestly disordered led to no satisfactory results. But he was convinced that Nathan had a little money; and by urgent insistence he succeeded in getting small sums from him now and then.

With these, and with what he himself earned at the bakehouse, he was able to provide for him quite comfortably during the following winter. The old man's sentry box was restored to its former use as a coal bin, and Andrew made him keep a good fire in the stove; he also brought in other necessaries; so

that the old house was rendered habitable in the cold weather.

He owed much to the advice and sympathy of Mrs. Wilbur and Phronie, and the substantial assistance they gave him.

Mr. Wilbur's bark was worse than his bite, his wife said; and she did not let his remonstrances cut off the stream of her benefits. Andrew, meanwhile, made himself so useful that the baker continued to give him employment, while regarding him with suspicion and dislike.

Lem Gorbett, friend of the Burge boys, and driver of one of the baker's wagons, was likewise aggrieved by the favor shown to Andrew by the women folks; and he managed to fan their employer's jealousy. Andrew felt deeply the unjust opposition of these two. But he consoled himself with the principle of conduct which his mother's letter had taught him. Whatever happened, he resolved to be patient and bide his time.

The winter was past, and it was April when Mrs. Wilbur told Andrew, one morning, that as

he had a little leisure he might get on Lem's wagon with him, and see something of the neighboring towns.

"I want you to get better acquainted," she said to Lem, "and be better friends." But what she said to her husband was this:

"You know very well, Lem's habits are not good, that he keeps bad company, Ned and Sol Burge, for instance, and you may be obliged to discharge him any day. You've said so yourself. But he thinks he has us in his power, because nobody else knows his routes. Now, I'm determined to have some one to put into his place, when we find we can't stand his ways any longer. Andrew is just that one."

"Oh, of course!" replied the baker, with heavy sarcasm. "Andrew! Andrew! it's always Andrew! You make a fool of that boy!"

Yet he did not absolutely forbid her putting Andrew on to learn Lem's routes. The result proved her foresight. It was not many weeks before Lem's dissipations culminated in a night's frolic which unfitted him for appearing at the shop at the usual hour the next morning.

It was ten o'clock before he finally came round, swaggering and insolent, and demanded what had become of his horse. He had been at the stable and missed him.

"Your horse?" cried the baker's wife. "The horse you have been driving, and the wagon, too, are in safer hands than yours. And I guess we can dispense with your services in future."

"Is that so, Mr. Wilbur?" Lem appealed, in a humble tone, to the baker.

"That's about the way it looks," Mr. Wilbur replied, siding with his wife for once. In fact, with all his grumbling and fretting, he usually followed her advice in matters of importance. "We can't have you coming to business this time of day, if you work for us."

"But you'll allow," pleaded Lem, "I've never been so late before."

"Perhaps not quite. But you've often come when you were not fit to get on to your wagon and drive a horse. You've had warnings enough, Lem Gorbett."

Lem still hoped to have the wagon again

the next day, and he lingered about the bake-house, trying to get back into favor. He only succeeded, however, in getting some occasional employment, in Andrew's place, while Andrew kept the wagon.

Andrew did not pretend to know much about horses; he had never had the care of one before. He liked it, however; he enjoyed the freedom of his new occupation, his rides, often in the open country, in the beautiful spring weather, his chats with customers, and, not least, his increased wages.

"He may bring in as much money as I did," Lem would say; "he can't very well help that. You know what he takes out, and what he ought to bring in. Any one, though, with half an eye, can see he don't know how to take care of a hoss. He don't keep Dicky brushed down as I did; and he's falling away in flesh."

## CHAPTER XIX.

ONE HORSE IN ANDREW'S CARE LOSES FLESH MYSTERIOUSLY; AND ANOTHER, FOR A LIKE INSCRUTABLE CAUSE, RUNS AWAY WITH HIS PIES AND CAKES.

NOBODY else could see that the animal was not as well curried now as when Lem had him. But along in June it became apparent, not only that his ribs were growing prominent, but that his spirit and strength were failing. Andrew himself was the first to perceive that Dicky no longer got over the track with lightness and ease, as when he first took him, but that he required more and more urging.

"Are you sure you feed him well?" the baker asked, seeing the horse come in jaded one evening.

"I'm very sure. I give him a measure of grain night and morning, just as you directed," replied Andrew; "and fill his rack with hay. His appetite is good, he eats up everything clean. And I water him regularly."

"Well, increase his feed a little," said the baker.

This Andrew did, but without putting flesh on the horse's ribs. There would be days when the animal would show a little more vigor in making his rounds; but on the whole there was no improvement.

"I'm afraid I shall have to put away that beast," Mr. Wilbur at length said, dubiously shaking his head, as he watched Andrew start off on one of his daily trips.

"Better put away the driver," replied Lem. "He don't know any more about a hoss than a frog does about a fiddle. See how he holds the reins!"

"I don't see but what he holds the reins as well as anybody," interposed the baker's wife, as she came to the door. "And why should he neglect the horse? He declares he don't, and I believe him. There's something the matter with Dicky."

"Here's Towner," said Lem. "Ask his opinion."

Towner was the driver of the other wagon.

Each driver took care of his own horse, and had nothing to do with the other. Towner was a middle-aged man, of few words, friendly enough to both Lem and Andrew, but inclined to take sides with his old associate against the new-comer.

"It's plain enough," he said, when his judgment was appealed to, "that Dicky don't have just the care he did when Lem drove him. I don't know why it is; must be Andrew don't feed him reg'lar. And I notice Dicky laps up his oats in a quarter the time the General does. I never saw a hoss eat so quick as he does lately. As if he was 'mos' starved."

"Do you think you could take Dicky and build him up again?" the baker asked.

Towner guessed he could if anybody could, but he didn't care to try.

"But I want you to try. I want you to drive Dicky and let Andrew take the General, till we see if changing masters will make the difference Lem claims it will."

This was not just the change Lem hoped for; neither did it suit Towner. He didn't

fancy the idea of giving up the sleek General to Andrew, and taking a run-down nag in his place.

Andrew was likewise chagrined. But Dicky's unaccountable falling away had so perplexed him, that he was ready to accept any arrangement that promised to explain the mystery.

To his great surprise, but I fear not quite so much to his gratification, Dicky began to pick up very soon after he passed into Towner's hands. Everybody noticed it; Lem crowed over it; and Andrew could not deny it. Fortunately, the General did not at the same time show signs of failure.

But something else happened, even more startling, late in the summer. The General ran away! To have a horse run away with a baker's wagon, and the pies and cakes and loaves and rolls that fill its lidded chests and case of drawers, is about as undesirable as any small accident that can be imagined.

Andrew did not know how it came about. He had left the General at the corner of a Somerville street, while he went to call upon a cus-

tomer near by ; he was detained a few minutes, and when he came out of the house, horse and wagon were gone. He ran to the corner in time to see a drawer which he had left unfastened, dropping out of the end of the wagon, followed quickly by another, scattering their tarts, pies, and jelly-cakes as the horse tore away up the street.

There was nobody near to tell what had frightened him, and Andrew did not stop to inquire. He followed, picking up the drawers by the way, but leaving their contents on the pavement, and kept on, in wild pursuit, expecting nothing less than that the wagon would be dashed to pieces and the General ruined.

The catastrophe was not so bad as it might have been, had the General been a less steady and sensible horse. He avoided obstacles in his course, and slackened his speed as he got farther away from the real or fancied danger that had startled him ; and finally turned up to the side door of the bakery, where he stopped. There Andrew found him, surrounded by a group of spectators, when, flushed and breath-

less and frightened, he came running, with an empty drawer in each hand, to learn the extent of the damage.

Phronie hastened to meet him; she and her mother had been far more anxious about him than about anything that might have happened to the horse and wagon.

"Don't mind! It's lucky you didn't have a smash-up," she said, reassuringly.

But how could he help minding? He didn't see how he was to blame, and yet he knew he would be blamed; and it was with a sense of something very much like guilt that he approached the wondering group, panting for breath, and lugging the drawers.

"I'm glad you've brought back a whole neck!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilbur, cheerfully, as she finished examining the shaken-up contents of the wagon. But the baker demanded, in his surliest tones: "What do you say to this?"

"I — don't know — what to say," Andrew gasped out. Then, as he gained breath, he went on to relate all he knew of the affair. The spectators generally appeared friendly.

Lem Gorbett was not there to jeer at him; only the boy, Ike, seemed to find much fun in the accident.

“Well!” growled the baker, “take him and finish your round, if you think you can be trusted; such a boy as you ain’t fit to have the management of a horse, anyway! Now we’ll see what will happen next.”

If Lem had been on the spot, there is no doubt but he would then and there have been put upon the wagon in Andrew’s place. But, the crisis over, Mrs. Wilbur prevailed upon her husband to give the unlucky Andrew still another trial.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHAT OUR HERO CARRIED HOME IN HIS POCKETS FROM ONE OF HIS TRIPS, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM IN THE DARKENED STABLE.

IT was for the most part a cash business, so that he had daily the handling of small sums. But Mr. Wilbur had a few bills out ; there was also a grocer in Medford whom he had assisted, and who was making prompt quarterly payments of his debt.

Early in October Andrew was commissioned to collect one of the Medford man's payments, together with a few other bills due on his route. So he returned home that afternoon with an unusual amount of money — one hundred and eight dollars — in what he called his “road-book.”

This was made for memoranda and bank-bills, and was fastened by a rubber band. He commonly carried it, for convenience, in the side pocket of his coat ; a safe enough place

under ordinary circumstances. But he had never before been entrusted with so much money at a time, and it made him more than commonly cautious. So he put it into his inside breast-pocket, and buttoned his coat over it tightly.

He had also another commission to execute that afternoon. Phronie wanted two or three ripe milkweed pods for some ornamental purpose, and had asked him to bring them home to her, if he should see any by the way. He had picked some on a hillside in Medford, and placed them loose in the side pocket where he usually carried his road-book.

He remembered that it was a year that day since he arrived at the old house on the hill, and made his first visit to the baker's shop. The recollection caused him to think of many things on his homeward ride; his strange experience with old man Petridge, the kindness of Phronie and her mother, the way in which his present occupation seemed to have been shaped for him, almost without any choice of his own, and how he had been prospered in spite of the

opposition of others. His mind went back to that dreary night in the old house, when he read his mother's letter, and took in for the first time its full significance; and forward to the future, which was beginning to look bright to him, though so different from what he had anticipated when he made his rash Eastern journey in answer to old Nathan's letter of invitation.

Occupied with these thoughts, the homeward drive seemed short to him; and yet it was nearly dark when he turned into the narrow lane, at the end of which, not far from the shop, stood the barn where the baker kept his wagons and horses. Towner's wagon was already in, and Dicky was champing hay in his stall.

Andrew drove his wagon in beside the other, felt the road-book secure, and assured himself that Phronie's milkweed pods were whole, anticipating the satisfaction of soon handing the money to the mother, and of showing the daughter that he had not forgotten her request.

He got down from the wagon, detached the General, unharnessed him, and, with a kindly

slap, sent him through a side door to his stall in the adjoining stable. His stall was the farthest; next to that was Dicky's; then there was an unoccupied stall near the door, containing a pile of litter for bedding.

He followed the General in, made him fast, and saw that there was hay in his rack; then returned to close the huge barn door, and bolt it on the inside, before going out through a smaller door from the stables.

The closing of the big door shut out what was left of the daylight, and he was groping his way to the smaller door, when he heard a rustling of litter which could not have been made by the horses. He paused a moment to listen; then, thinking there was a cat in the stable, he started again for the door. But just as he did so, something big and tremendous flapped over and down upon him, like an enormous wing.

"Ho! What's this?" he shouted, in the sudden fright it gave him, and with the folds of a heavy horse blanket swiftly closing about and stifling his outcry,

He struggled with all his might to cast it off,

and free his face and hands, but something clasped it close, and held it down, and crushed him under it, and bore him, still struggling and uttering muffled cries, to the ground.

Overpowered and deprived of breath, he almost lost consciousness of what was taking place; but he was aware of struggling still, feebly and ineffectually, and of trying to shriek for help, while strong hands held and choked him, and rifled his pockets. Then there was a blank.

When he came to himself, he was lying on the stable floor, gasping for breath, with the blanket wrapped closely about his head, breast, and arms. He quickly remembered that some terrible thing had happened to him, and made an effort to free himself. That was not easily done. The blanket was tied on.

He succeeded in getting an arm out, and sat up, with the frightful encumbrance still over his head and chest. His one free hand now freed the other; they found and loosened a rope halter twisted around the blanket, and flung off all together.

Then, sitting in the darkness on the stable floor, he clutched his breast, only to find his coat torn open, and the road-book gone.

"I've been robbed!" he cried aloud, in despair, as he felt again and again in his pockets, and struggled blindly to his feet.

He had one faint hope; the book might have fallen out in the tussle, and got lost in the litter of the floor.

By the door hung a lantern, which he had not thought it necessary to light until he should return later to the stable, to bed the General and give him his oats; but now, with shaking nerves, he struck a light, and, lantern in hand, his hat gone, his hair tumbled over his eyes, he stooped and poked, and stifled fierce, dry sobs.

The struggle had taken place between the unoccupied stall and the door. There lay Andrew's hat, which he picked up, and shook, and put on his head. There was the horse-blanket still entangled in the rope; this he also shook and flung aside. And there was a light sprinkling of loose straw, but no pocket-book.

"I'VE BEEN ROBBED!" HE SAID, HUSKILY." Page 133.

Illustration by E. A. M. 1903





## CHAPTER XXI.

**SHOWING HOW HARD IT MAY SOMETIMES BE FOR AN INNOCENT PERSON TO MAKE HIS INNOCENCE APPEAR.**

“GRACIOUS me, Andrew Hapnell! What’s the trouble?”

This exclamation burst from Mrs. Wilbur, when the boy, having entered the rear shop and found nobody, went forward and presented himself, with haggard features and disordered dress, in the salesroom.

“I’ve been robbed,” he said, huskily, but so quietly that the announcement seemed wholly incredible.

“Robbed! How? Of what?” cried the baker’s wife.

“Of that money,” he replied. “It was taken from me just now in the stable.”

In a minute he was surrounded by the whole family, the baker, Mrs. Wilbur, Phronie, and two or three customers. He, the centre of the excited group, appeared the calmest of all, but

with the calmness of exhaustion and stupefaction.

"How much money?" Mr. Wilbur demanded, his sparkling eyes scanning the miserable lad from head to foot. Andrew explained.

"Was any of your money taken?"

"No; I left my money at home, all but a little change I had in my pocket. They didn't take the change."

"They? Who?"

"How should I know?"

"Did you chase them?"

"How could I, when they left a horse-blanket tied over my head?"

"Did you yell?"

"Of course I did, or tried to, till they choked the yell out of me." Something of Andrew's peculiar drawl, which he had mostly got rid of, came into his tones as he said this, and gave a humorous turn to his words, though he had never in his life felt so little like making fun.

"Did you run to the door and call help, the first thing?" Mrs. Wilbur asked, while Phronie laughed hysterically.

"No; I suppose I ought to; but it was too late then. I stopped to look for the road-book."

"And you're sure it ain't in the stable?" said the baker.

"Not unless it got into the pile of straw in the vacant stall, and I don't see how that could be," Andrew replied.

"Let's go and see!" said the baker, severe almost to savageness. It was clear enough that he did not believe a word of Andrew's story.  
"Where's Lem?"

"He came in from the back shop a few minutes before Andrew did, to say he was going for his supper," Phronie replied. "He was putting on his coat."

"And Ike?"

"He's out doing errands."

"You'll have to go yourself then, Phronie, and bring a policeman," said the father, "while I go with Andrew to the barn, and look into the matter, if there's such a thing as looking into it."

Andrew explained again on the spot, as

clearly as he could, to Mr. Wilbur and others who accompanied them to the barn, and afterwards to the policeman who came with Phronie, how the robbery had taken place, and why he acted as he did. He faltered in his replies to a few questions; much remained confused in his mind, and some of the reasons he gave for his conduct seemed to himself so insufficient that he tried to think of better ones.

The truth is, one hardly knows what his own actions and motives are in such a crisis of surprise and fright, and he must have a clearer head than the most of us possess who can afterwards give a straightforward account of things. Thus it happens that the most innocent person will sometimes stammer and forget, while the tale told by the rogue will flow with persuasive smoothness.

Unfortunately, Andrew saw yawning before him the danger of not being believed. A Charlestown clerk had lately been convicted of robbing himself, in order to defraud his employers; a notorious case, still in everybody's mind. He felt the horror of being suspected

of playing the same miserable trick, and this made him appear even too anxious to clear himself.

The barn was well back from the street, but not far from other barns and houses, and it seemed that he might have made himself heard at the time of the assault. His assailants could have escaped in the obscurity, by another street in the rear, but it appeared strange that he did not run out and try at least to discover them the moment he was free, instead of waiting to light a lantern and look for the pocket-book.

There were signs of a scuffle on the littered floor, but nothing which Andrew might not have made himself in order to corroborate his story.

When asked if he had any idea who the guilty parties were, he stammered again, and then was silent. He thought he could guess who they were ; but he had no proof, and dared not mention names, lest he might be still further suspected of trying to implicate others in order to screen himself.

But he was sure there were two robbers, if not three, and that one of them was tall, with

long arms, and very strong. Persons living in the nearest houses were questioned, but nobody had heard any disturbance in the barn, and no suspicious characters had been seen there.

It was late when the matter was finally left in the hands of the police, and the baker's family went in to supper.

"You are coming, too?" Phronie said to Andrew, as he lingered outside the door.

"Why, yes, of course he is coming!" Mrs. Wilbur exclaimed. "Why not, Andrew?" She spoke kindly, but he felt that even she doubted his truth.

"I can't eat anything," he replied, looking a picture of wretchedness, as he hung back and saw the rest go in. And, indeed, his lack of appetite was no pretence. The scuffle, the fall, the excitement and exhaustion, still more perhaps the ordeal of questions and explanations he had gone through, had left him sick in body and soul.

"Come, Andrew!" Phronie stayed to entreat him. "Don't take it so to heart. It will all turn out right."

"I hope it will. If it don't, I—I don't see how I am to blame; but if others blame me"—His feelings were mastering him, and he hastened to change the subject. "I am sorry the milkweed pods I had picked for you got crushed in the scuffle; but I will get you some more the first chance I have."

"Oh, don't mention them!" cried Phronie, in great distress. "I am so sorry, Andrew! Do come in!"

"I really can't," he replied, dropping a tear or two. "I have a headache. I'll see you in the morning; I shall be better then."

"Oh, I hope you will! I know it has been terrible to you. Good-night, Andrew!"

She, at least, believed in him; but why should she? He was half inclined to lose faith in himself. The whole affair of the robbery seemed sickeningly unreal to him. Yet there was the coat torn out at the buttonhole, the empty breast pocket, the milkweed pods crushed to husks and feathers in his side pocket, and the dreadful headache.

## CHAPTER XXII.

ANDREW TAKES A HOLIDAY, AND EXPERIENCES THE NOVEL SENSATION OF SEEING HIS NAME IN PRINT.

ANDREW, after a miserable night, returned to business in more cheerful spirits in the morning. He went first to the barn, intending to give the General his breakfast before taking his own, but was stopped at the door, by Ike, who ran calling after him,—

“ You don’t drive to-day. Lem’s going to drive.”

Although Andrew had half expected this, it went to his heart like an arrow. Lem was there before him, whistling in the barn.

“ Ike,” Andrew said, “ I’ve always been a friend to you, haven’t I? At least, I’ve meant to be; and though you’ve plagued me sometimes, with your nonsense, I think you’ve been a friend to me.”

“ Course I have,” Ike answered, in so strange a tone, and appearing to regard him

with such aversion, that Andrew's heart sank. Even Ike believed him guilty.

"I was going to ask you something, but no matter; another time," and he walked on behind the boy, to the bakehouse.

He was prepared for what Mr. Wilbur had to say to him. The baker met him in the bakeshop, with cold, stern looks.

"Ike told you what I said?"

"Yes, sir; Lem takes the team, to-day."

"Exactly," said the baker. "We've had enough of your style of driving."

After a pause, Andrew said, in a choking voice, "Then I suppose you have nothing for me to do?"

"Only one thing," said the baker. "Find that money."

"But—how—I don't know anything about it!" Andrew protested.

"Find that money!" the baker repeated, in a harsh tone. "Then come back to me. Not before."

Andrew turned to go without a word; he was so overcome by the monstrous injustice of

which he was the victim, that he felt it would break his heart to speak. Twenty-two dollars of his pay was still due him, but he could not ask for it. The baker called him back.

"Take my advice, Hapnell. We've been good friends to you here, and I speak as a friend now. For your own sake, before it is too late, bring back that money, and make a clean breast of it."

Andrew stood staring in a stupor of dumb distress. The friendly Mr. Wilbur went on.

"It's a preposterous story you tell; I think so, and the police think so, too. Nobody believes there was any robbery. You know where that money is, and I say again, take my advice before it is too late."

"Mr. Wilbur," Andrew at last found voice to reply, "I have told you the truth as well I could. And now, if you mean to turn me out in this way, after you—after Mrs. Wilbur"—

He could say no more, but went out, struggling manfully to repress the wrenching sobs that heaved and broke up his voice.

Andrew did not go back to the house on the hill. There was nothing for him there; old man Petridge could give him neither counsel nor comfort.

He had a few acquaintances in the place, but no intimate friends. There was only one person to whom he wished to pour out his heart. That was Phronie Wilbur. She, at least,—so he hoped,—would give him trust and sympathy; but he could not go to her after being so ruthlessly turned out of doors by her father.

To collect his thoughts, to master his feelings, to get out of sight of everybody who knew him, he walked fast and far. The morning was beautiful; the wayside maples were gorgeous; distant woods flamed like subdued fires in veils of smoke and haze. Gradually, he recovered his firmness of mind, and recalled the philosophical resolutions with which he had begun the day.

In the lonely suburbs, he struck a railroad track, and reflected that it would lead him to Boston. Growing beside it, he saw a cluster

of dry milkweed stalks, bearing aloft their ripened pods on curiously contorted stems. A great heart-sickness came over him, as he remembered the desire and hope with which he gathered those pods for Phronie, the day before, and, turning away his face, he hurried on.

But then he said, "I promised to get her some more," and retraced his steps. He had that morning cleared his pocket of the broken pods, and the adhesive silky down, and into it he put half-a-dozen more of the most perfect ones he could find.

Then he walked again; he walked to Boston, and walked the streets all day, seeking for employment, but finding none. His spirit rose above all discouragement. "I can walk," he said; "I can walk all the way back to Ohio, if I get nothing to do here."

He sat down to rest on a bench by the Frog Pond, before starting for home. Home! With that old man? He wondered how he had continued to live with him so long and what would become of them both, if he could get

no work. "A poor prospect for A. H.!" he said to himself, with set lips.

The Common was lovely in its autumnal hues. Through the glowing tree-tops, softened bars of sunlight slanted to the rippling and dazzling water. Merry youngsters were sailing their toy ships across from curb to curb. Andrew was looking listlessly about him, seeing, yet not seeing, with intense preoccupation of mind, when a singular circumstance recalled him abruptly to himself.

His roving eyes lighted by chance on an evening paper which a stranger was reading, on the bench beside him, and stopped at a column of "Suburban Items." The heading of the first paragraph fixed his attention.

#### "WAS IT A ROBBERY?"

As his eye glanced down the lines, he ceased to be Andrew Hapnell; he became a living, quivering embodiment of consternation, anger and shame. For there, in about two stickfuls (in printers' phrase), some witty reporter told the story of his adventure of the night before,

giving names in full, but getting Andrew's ludicrously wrong ("Andrew Happenill!"), and twisting facts about, to make them as lively reading as possible. A probable negative answer to the question, "Was it a robbery?" was plainly enough implied, the writer adding in the conclusion,—

"The police are diligently looking for clues, but no arrests have been made."

The stranger folded his paper, and put it into his pocket, little knowing that the hero of that paragraph, which he smiled at, was sitting on the bench, and reading it over his shoulder.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

OLD NATHAN EATS CHESTNUTS AGAIN, WITH RESULTS OF VERY GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HIMSELF AND HIS NEPHEW.

As Andrew entered, that evening, the door of the old house on the hill, he was smilingly met by the old man; but Nathan's countenance fell when he saw that the boy had come empty-handed, for he usually brought up something from the bakery at that hour.

"Well," said the old man, "what are we to have for supper?"

"I haven't been at the bakehouse since morning," Andrew replied. "I am not going there any more. I am out of work and very nearly out of money."

He sat down wearily on a chair by the table, on which the lamp was burning. The old man was more willing to burn oil since it was supplied by his nephew, at no expense to himself.

"But what are we to do?" cried the old man.

"Do? We shall go hungry, I suppose, unless I can find work, or you will be a little more liberal with your millions."

Nathan had continued to hand out small sums now and then, but had never yet revealed the source of them; and Andrew, as long as he was earning money enough for both, cared little for the old man's. "Something has happened," the boy added, gloomily, "which I fear will prevent my getting any more work about here, and I may have to go back to Ohio."

"You mean to desert me!" cried the old man, taking alarm. "I'll be liberal. You shall draw freely on my riches, and I—I'll give you my cane!"

"You've given me that two or three times before," said Andrew.

"But you've never appreciated the present. It is a wonderful relic. Staff made of the rail of the house Dr. Franklin was born in. The head is a piece of the frigate *Constitution*.

The ferrule was a Spanish dollar given to my father by Lafayette, for holding his horse one day, when he was on his visit to this country."

Andrew had heard this story, too, or something like it, several times before, but had regarded it as one of the old man's queer fancies. Once the staff was a piece of a pillory that used to stand on Boston Common; the head was something else, and the dollar had been given by President John Quincy Adams.

"It's real silver," the old man went on, "though you may not think so; and it's yours. Only don't abandon a poor old man in his hour of need!"

He actually extended the cane towards Andrew, but quickly drew it back when Andrew reached out his hand for it.

"When I am through with it," he said, with a crafty grin.

Again the next day he tramped the Boston streets in the hope of finding something to do. It was a disheartening quest; he would much more gladly have turned his face the other way, and begun his long foot journey back to Ohio;

but he could not make up his mind to quit the old man, whom he had made so much more comfortable during his stay than he had been for years, or could be again without him.

Release was near, however, with freedom to set off on that longer, wearier tramp facing the Western sun.

Returning home in the afternoon of that second day, he found a strange group in the house. Nathan Petridge was in the midst of it, but not of it. He was lying dead on his bed, and his nephew by blood relationship, Mr. Solomon Burge, had already taken possession.

Andrew was conscience-smitten. He had left the old man on short rations that day, because he himself was so nearly out of money, and it was necessary to compel a contribution from the secret fund. The result was that Nathan had probably eaten chestnuts, which were again in season, and had died in one of his fits of indigestion.

He had had so many of these spasms since Andrew had known him, always expecting to die in each attack, that the boy had ceased to

be frightened by them; and now he had been carried off by one at last.

Andrew learned that somebody had come to the house and found him dying, and had sent for a doctor and called in other neighbors, so that the elder Burge had heard the news, and come also, bringing with him an old woman to take charge of the house, and look out for his interests. The belief in a hidden treasure was still held by the old man's relations, and it was their policy not to leave Andrew alone in the house a moment after his death.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR HERO TAKES HIS FINAL DEPARTURE FROM THE OLD  
HOUSE, AND SETS OFF ON A DUBIOUS ADVENTURE.

THE person who had found him dying, and had given the alarm, was Mrs. Wilbur. Her large, motherly heart yearned toward the cast-off boy. She pitied him if innocent, pitied him even more if guilty, and longed to talk with him again. Her own misgivings and Phronie's importunities gave her no peace until she had made him a visit. But she had come and gone, and Andrew was deprived of the consolation of knowing why she had come.

"She spoke of having some things in the house, which she lent you and Uncle Nathan," said Mr. Burge. "I'll thank you to point them out."

The thrifty housekeeper had indeed be-thought her to speak in season of those things,



"HE WENT FOR THE LAST TIME OUT OF THAT OLD HOUSE."



in order to save them from the well-known rapacity of Nathan's lawful heirs. But the thick-set, gross-featured man put the case in a way that made Andrew think that had been her sole business in coming to the house. As if, now that she trusted him no longer, she were in anxious haste to get back her loans.

"I will see to them," said Andrew. "And I suppose," he added, "there is no use of my staying any longer."

"I don't see any use in it," Mr. Burge replied, with stony coldness.

The sheets on his own bed and one of the blankets belonged to Mrs. Wilbur. To these he added a pair of blankets which he had bought with his own money, and putting all into one big bundle, together with everything else he had had of her, even including a pair of handkerchiefs, he tied them up, ready for the expressman. Then he put his milkweed pods in a paper box, which he had brought from Boston for the purpose; and scribbled a few lines, which he tucked under the string tied around it. This is what he wrote:—

"Phronie, here are the milkweed pods I promised you. I send them along with the bundle of other things. Tell your mother that I send a few of my own things, because I have no more use for them, here or anywhere. I don't suppose it will be pleasant for any of you to see me again, thinking of me as you do, at least some of you, though I did hope, you, Phronie, knew me better. I am not running away; I am ready to stand the consequences of anything I ever did in my life. But I am going away. I start out to find work of some kind, and shall probably make my way back to Ohio. I am sick of cities and city life.

"Tell your mother not to think I do not thank her, and you, too, Phronie, for all your kindness to me. I do thank you both. It may be a long while before your father will know how unjustly he has treated me. But I believe he will learn the truth some day. I can bide my time."

Then Andrew packed his little red valise, and smiled to think he had only about the same amount of clothing worth taking away, as he had brought with him from Ohio, and even less money.

What had his year been worth to him?

But he did not repine. Old clothes had been replaced by new; old habits of thought by fresh

experiences; narrow views of life by a larger and fuller knowledge.

When all was ready, he gave a last tearful look around the old attic, which had somehow become dear to him, and with a big sigh, valise in hand, descended the crooked stairs. Only Mr. Burge and the woman he had placed in charge remained in the room below. Andrew would have avoided facing them if he could; but he did not wish to steal away.

“Off?” said Mr. Burge, with a darkly suspicious look at the boy’s valise.

“I can’t do anything more for *him*.” He glanced tremulously at the bed where the little shrivelled old man lay. “That’s about all I’ve been staying for the past year.”

“Huh!” Not a word of thanks from Mr. Burge, for all Andrew had done for his dead relative, only a swinish grunt. And he still eyed the red valise.

“Perhaps you would like to see what I am carrying out of the house,” said Andrew. “I’ll turn everything inside out for you, even to my empty pockets.”

"No," grumbled Mr. Burge. Andrew was quite too willing.

He gave a last look at the pinched, wrinkled, and pallid face on the pillow, wearing even in death such a smile of craft and conceit as he had often seen upon it in life. Then with his valise, and a heavy but resolute heart, he went for the last time out of that old house on the hill.

He found the youngest of the Burge boys clubbing the chestnut tree. The sight filled him with indignant scorn.

"But never mind," he said to himself. "The old man doesn't care who gets his chestnuts now."

The same wonderful world spread about him, which he beheld when he first climbed that hill a year before,—the suburban fields and streets, the distant cities, the gleams of water, and the far-off heights, veiled or half veiled by the October smoke and haze; and here a train of cars flying through the landscape, with its long, vaporous plume. Yet what a different world it was to him now!

He avoided the bakery, but showed himself openly in the town, going first to the express office, to leave an order for the removal of Mrs. Wilbur's effects; then began his long tramp over the hills, with his face toward the sunset, little knowing how or when or where it was to end.

## CHAPTER XXV.

TRACES A CURIOUS CONNECTION BETWEEN LEM GORBETT'S COAT CUFF AND ANDREW HAPNELL'S POCKET.

IT was not until the next morning that the expressman brought Mrs. Wilbur her bundle, and Phronie her box of milkweed pods and letter. That the young girl had a good cry over her share, we may well believe. To think that the wronged Andrew, for she had really never once doubted him, should in the midst of his trouble remember his promise to her, and take the pains to gather and send to her those worthless pods, which she cared nothing for now, and could not bear to look upon again!

And yet, those worthless things suddenly assumed an undefined value in her eyes. Poor little pitiful pods, with their soft brown seeds enclosed, so marvellously arranged around their folded silken wings, which they covered and concealed until the hour for escape should ar-

rive! She had not the heart to open one of them. She would keep them to remember Andrew by, if she should never see him again.

Mrs. Wilbur did not cry, as Phronie did; but she was filled with pangs of remorse at the sight of the sheets and blankets and handkerchiefs coming back.

“Why did he send *these?*” she exclaimed, her large heart heaving with its woes. “But perhaps he was right. He knew I half suspected him. I did, for a time. The more fool I! But I don’t now. Oh, we must send for him and have him back!”

But where send? Mrs. Wilbur went again up to the old house. But it was a fruitless errand. The woman in charge knew nothing of Andrew, except that he had gone off the evening before.

“It convinces *me* he has got that money,” said the baker, when told of Andrew’s departure. “Or it *would* convince me, if I wasn’t convinced before. Such a robbery as he invented was simply impossible.”

And yet Mr. Wilbur himself, as he afterwards confessed, had secret qualms as to the very points about which he was so positive. Though of a surly and jealous disposition, he meant always to be just; and what if he had not been just to Andrew?

He didn't like Lem Gorbett in Andrew's place, now he had got him back. What was there in Lem's manner, as he went whistling to his work, that filled him with misgivings and disgust? Lem did not always whistle in that way.

Andrew had been gone three days, and was many miles away; and the old man was in his grave, his secret buried with him,—which, however, his greedy relatives were trying to discover, by systematically demolishing the old house; when, one afternoon, as Phronie was passing through the back shop, she suddenly stopped, fixed her eyes on something, advanced, looked still more closely, and uttered an exclamation.

“Ma!” she called. “Do come here!”

“What is it?” her father inquired, looking

up from a thin sheet of cake which he was covering with jelly.

"Lem's coat," she exclaimed. "Do you know what this is?"

"I don't see as it makes any difference what it is;" and after a glance, the baker returned to his jelly-cake.

Neither did Mrs. Wilbur, who came in from the front shop, perceive any significance in the girl's discovery.

"Don't you know?" she cried; "it is the coat he used to wear about the bakehouse; he had it on, the evening of the robbery, and he hasn't worn it since. He wears his other coat when he drives the wagon. And this—and this—don't you know what these things are?"

She was growing more and more excited; her mother stooped, lifting the coat-sleeve toward her eyes, and picking at the specks Phronie pointed out.

"Some sort of seeds—not thistledown," she ventured.

"Don't touch one of them!" cried Phronie. "They are milkweed seeds. Andrew had some

pods in his pocket, and they got smashed when he was robbed. See! they are nowhere but just here on the cuff!"

"Even on the inside edge of the cuff!" Mrs. Wilbur exclaimed, beginning to take in the serious import of what seemed at first so trifling.

"Lem was in the shop when the robbery took place," said the baker, looking scowlingly at the seeds.

"You don't know that he was," his wife replied. "You were not there yourself. He was there *after* the robbery, for he changed his coat, and went out the front way, just before Andrew came in. Phronie remembers that."

"Better say nothing about it. Let the coat hang there," said the baker, rolling up his cake. "It may lead to something, though I don't believe it."

"Andrew used to carry his road-book — and the money, when he had any in bills — in that pocket," said Phronie. "Lem knew it; and Lem knew he was going to collect bills that day."

There were only five seeds, with their feathery attachments, on the coat cuff. There were, however, other bits of down from which the seeds had been broken off. Mrs. Wilbur, as she examined them, took on her daughter's excitement. Phronie brought one of the fresh pods Andrew had sent her, opened it, and pulled off some of the seeds, for comparison.

"Sure as you're a live man, Thomas Wilbur," her mother exclaimed, "that cuff has been in Andrew Hapnell's pocket! It's a clue! Thank Heaven, at last we have a clue!"

Suspicion had already fallen upon Lem; but bad as were his habits and his associates, it was hard to believe that he would be guilty of so bold a robbery. Now, however, even Mr. Wilbur's obstinate opinions were shaken.

"And I believe Ike knows something about it," Phronie declared. "There's been something between him and Lem for a long while, that I couldn't understand,—and they've been thicker than ever lately."

"I've noticed the same, now I think of it," said her mother. "Leave all to me, now, and we'll unravel the mischief."

Accordingly, when Ike came in, she collared and accused him.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CLEARING UP OF ONE MYSTERY LETS IN UNEXPECTED SIDE-LIGHTS UPON TWO OTHERS.

IKE protested his innocence, but appeared so thoroughly frightened that Mrs. Wilbur felt sure some valuable information might be shaken out of him.

"It ain't anything about the robbery!" he whimpered. "It's about —about—you remember when Dicky lost flesh last summer? Lem bored holes in his manger, so the grain that we fed him would run through faster'n he could eat it. There's a dark corner there, and a box where we used to have a setting hen. The grain run into the box. But I found out the trick one day, hunting hens' eggs."

"Lem said he'd have my scalp if I told; and after that he used to hire me to go and pull the hay out of Dicky's rack, and put it into the General's, when he couldn't get a chance to do it himself. After Towner took Dicky. Lem

plugged up the holes, and he didn't dare bore any in the General's manger. Said he was bound, though, to have Andrew put out of his way."

After this confession wrung from the boy almost sentence by sentence, Mr. Wilbur took him to the barn, and ordered him to point out the plugs in the manger.

"He's the biggest scoundrel that ever lived," he said, "or else you are telling an abominable pack of lies!" But there were the pegs, not too carefully trimmed off, and the box beneath, with some oats still in it, not wholly shaken out of the hen's-nest litter.

Mr. Wilbur proposed to put this new evidence at once into the hands of the police, but his wife restrained him.

"You were too hasty with Andrew," she said. "Now don't be in too much of a hurry with Lem, and spoil everything."

He took her advice ; he waited till Lem came in at dusk, then said to him, quietly, "Whose coat is that hanging there, yours or Andrew's?"

"Mine," said Lem. He was a little surprised at the question, since the baker had seen him wear the garment a hundred times.

"What makes you leave it here?"

"I don't know. I just had it to put on when I was at work about the shop."

"How long since you wore it?"

"Not since I've been driving."

"That is, not since that night?" said the baker. "Look at the cuff of the right sleeve, and see what that stuff is sticking to it." He had turned from whatever work he was doing, and stood sternly watching the driver.

"Blamed if I know!" said Lem, holding it toward the gaslight. "Cotton, ain't it? Or dandelion down."

"How did bits of cotton, or down of any kind, get on your coat cuff?" Mr. Wilbur grimly demanded.

"I don't know no more'n the man in the moon," replied Lem, pale and disturbed.

"I know!" said the baker. "That's milkweed down, and you got it out of Andrew Hapnell's pocket. Don't you pick it off!" he thun-

dered out. "Not till the police have seen it. Your game is up, Lem Gorbett!"

Lem stood aghast in the gaslight, quite dumb for a moment, then faltered out, with a sickly attempt at a smile, —

"You don't think — I" —

"I don't think at all!" struck in the baker. "I know! Everything is out, or coming out, even to your boring holes in Dicky's manger, and starving him, so that I would put you in Andrew's place. A man that can do such a thing as that to a dumb beast will be guilty of any crime he thinks for his advantage. Don't you lie to me! Tell me anything but the truth, and I turn you over to the police in a minute."

Lem was so overwhelmed by this torrent of terrible accusation that he did not try to speak at all. He stood glaring and grimacing with fright, and breathing quick, short breaths.

"The only chance for you," said the baker, "is to tell me everything this minute, and return that money, or give me some reasonable assurance that it will be returned, and name



" ' IT'S A CLUE. '



your confederates. I'll give you just one minute to say 'I will' or 'I won't.' "

Lem didn't wait for the minute to expire, but muttered, "*I will!*"

"Who were the scamps?" the baker demanded.

"Ned and Sol Burge. But we didn't mean it for a robbery," said Lem, with trembling lips. "We just meant to take the money, so Andrew couldn't hand it in, and you would lose confidence in him."

"Where is it now?"

"Hid in the barn, unless the Burges have got it. They are bothering now to have it divided, though they was willing I should keep it hid till the excitement about it blew over. They wanted to drive him out of town, for fear he would get old man Petridge's money, or prevent them from getting it."

In his shaken condition, Lem was willing to tell everything; he even charged Sol Burge with being the cause of the General's running away from Andrew in the summer (by putting a thistle under the horse's tail); and he

offered to go at once to the beam in the barn, behind which he had hidden the money.

“I meant to get it before, or have Ike pretend to find it, and make you believe Andrew had put it there. But his going away spoiled that plan; for, of course, if he had meant to steal it, he would have managed to take it with him.”

Lem further declared that it was not he who took the road-book from Andrew; he had indeed put his hand in the pocket where he expected to find it, while the Burge boys held their victim, but it was Sol who then tore open the buttoned coat, and found it.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

IN WHICH THE MOST IMPORTANT MYSTERY OF ALL RECEIVES A STARTLING SOLUTION.

GREAT was the joy of Phronie and her mother over Andrew's vindication; but to render their triumph complete, he should have been there to share it. And he had gone off, no one knew whither, with his burden of cruel wrong.

The next day's issue of the evening paper, in which Andrew had read that entertaining paragraph about himself, had another item on the subject from the same lively pen. It began with the statement that the question, "Was it a robbery?" had fortunately been answered in a way to relieve young Hapnell of all suspicion of fraudulent design.

"*Hapnell*, it seems, is the correct rendering of the name, and not *Happenill*, as our misinformed reporter had it. Perhaps *Happenwell* would be a more appropriate orthography for

our little romance." For a little romance it proved, in the hands of the fanciful writer, with Andrew for its hero.

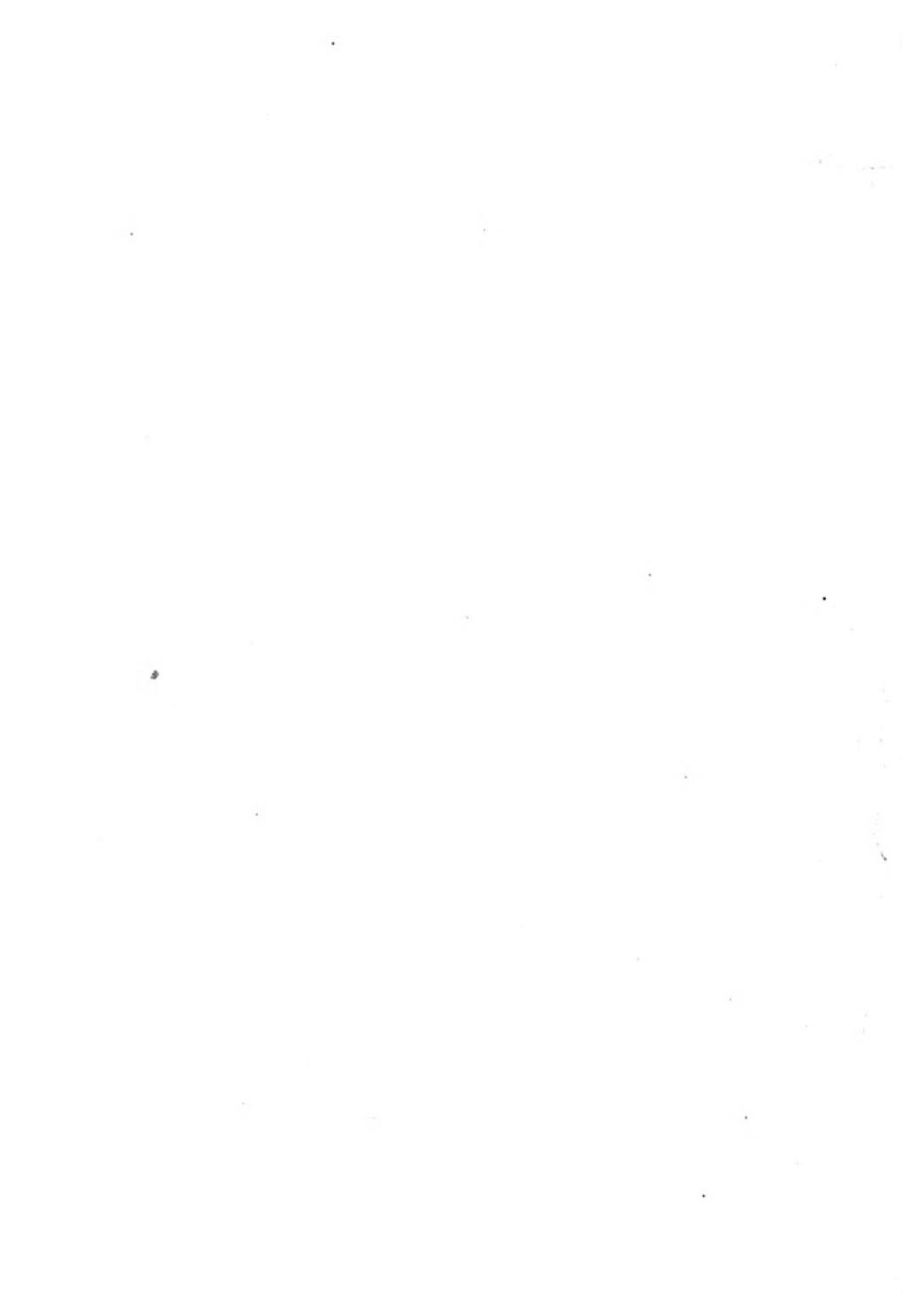
Alas that the hero could not have had the satisfaction of reading also that pleasant sequel to the first harrowing chapter of the tale! But he was that afternoon far out of reach of Boston evening papers, travelling a lonely country road in Western Massachusetts.

He was weary and discouraged; he had been tramping all day in search of work, and had had nothing to eat since morning. He was literally out of money, having spent his last cent for his last night's lodging and a meagre breakfast.

Nobody seemed to want the services of a boy like him, and he had no trade by which to recommend himself. He was not even acquainted with ordinary farm work. He might have assisted at gathering apples, but it was not an apple year, and other crops were all in. There seemed to be nothing doing in the sleepy villages he passed through; he could not even get a job of sawing wood.

"HE SAT UTTERLY DAZED FOR A FEW MOMENTS." Page 177.





What was he to do for supper and a night's lodging? He might crawl under a stack after dark, but he could not eat straw. Was it possible that he, Andrew Hapnell, would be reduced to asking for bread, like the tramps who had so often stopped to beg at his mother's door?

"It can't last always," he said to himself, as, haggard, hollow-chested and footsore, he went stooping under his burden along the rough highway. "If I can find a village, I'll try to sell or pawn some of my things."

He carried his valise on his back, slung on his cane, the old man's cane, which he had found useful in his long and toilsome journey.

"There's one thing I should like," he had said on taking leave of the nephew in possession of the house, after Miser Nathan's death. "That old walking-stick. He gave it to me two or three times, but I don't suppose his giving amounts to anything."

"Not unless I say you can take it," the dead man's nephew and guardian had replied. "I don't object." He cast a contemptuous glance at the clumsy cane, which somebody

had removed from the old man's side after his death, and placed in a corner.

"You may not think I got to care for him," said Andrew; "but I did."

He now carried the cane slanted over his shoulder, and his right hand, grasping it to balance the weight at the other end, brought the head down before his eyes.

"I follow it," he said, "as the donkey followed the carrot hung just before his nose. A piece of the frigate *Constitution!* I might as well be adrift with it on the broad Atlantic. The silver dollar given by Lafayette or somebody"—

A sudden thought struck him. "If it's real silver, I might at least turn that into money, and eat it!" In the midst of his weariness and misery, all sorts of fancies flitted through his brain, and he was already thinking of something far away in time and space,—an incident of his school days in Ohio,—when he found himself mechanically picking at the ferrule.

It seemed tight enough, but there was a rivet which could be pushed in; and this rivet, though evidently not silver, was brighter than

the ferrule it served to hold in place. It was of steel, and must have been kept bright by frequent rubbing. All at once Andrew's wandering thoughts were brought back by a startling discovery.

It was not a rivet, but a spring. He tumbled his valise against a wall by the wayside, and himself beside it, and, sitting on the brown turf, among the goldenrods, he eagerly applied himself to study the mechanism of the cane. Pressure on the spring enabled him to twist the head. Twisting the head unscrewed it. Off it came in his hand, while his other hand held, not a solid stick, but a tube, in which a roll of papers appeared.

There were, in fact, rolls within rolls. Picking at them with fingers and knife-blade, he pulled out the core of all, about the size of a pencil, and unfolded it to a handful of crisp, curling bank notes. Outside of these were strange-looking, printed sheets, which, drawn out and unrolled, proved to be government bonds, with their rows of coupons attached.

He sat utterly dazed for a few moments.

Then, as he slowly realized the incredible good fortune that had come to him, in the extremity of his need, a bubbling laugh began deep down in his heart, welled up, and burst, shaking him to a mere jelly of joy, and showering tears from his eyes.

Suddenly he gathered together the treasure in his lap, and looked quickly up and down the road, to see that there were no witnesses to his extraordinary conduct.

There was nobody in sight. The old man's long-hidden riches were revealed; if not millions, they were at least thousands, and there was no one to dispute with him their possession.

There were three bonds of a thousand dollars each, and one of five hundred. There were over two hundred dollars in greenbacks and bank notes; moreover, the bonds still bore the coupons due in November. As the bonds were payable, interest and principal, in gold, and gold was then at a premium, the whole amounted to not less than five thousand dollars in current funds.

Andrew made a rapid computation to that effect, as he rolled up the bonds again with the bills, saving out enough for his present needs ; and, returning the rest to the cane, he screwed on the head. Then, forgetful of hunger and fatigue, even of the wrongs he had endured, he took up his valise and tramped on, to command supper, lodgings, luxury, and conveyance to any part of the world, at the touch of the fairy wand he carried in the shape of a clumsy old cane.

Still it all seemed to him fabulous, more like an "Arabian Nights" tale than a sober reality. But his happiness — if the feverish excitement he felt could be called happiness — was marred by the intruding thought that this wealth was not altogether rightfully his ; that to keep it safe, he must keep it concealed.

He reached a railroad station in about half an hour, and learned, to his satisfaction, that by waiting half an hour longer, beguiling the time with a good lunch, he could take a westward-bound train, and sleep that night in Albany, on his way back to his Ohio home.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**ANDREW RELATES HIS ADVENTURE WITH THE CANE TO  
A HIGHLY INTERESTED AUDIENCE.**

AFTER which, it seems strange that, only two days afterward, the recipient of this sudden wealth should have returned to the scene of his year's battle with fortune, from which up to that time he had seemed so anxious to get far and farther away.

He stepped from a horse-car as on the afternoon of his first arrival at old Nathan's house. He did not have his valise with him now; he carried only his magical cane. He walked up the street and over the hill, and smiled at the work of demolition going on.

"They were right in believing the old man had money," thought he; "but a little mistaken as to the place where he kept it."

He marvelled that Mr. Burge himself should have allowed him to walk off with the miser's cane.

A few minutes later Phronie uttered a scream of joyful surprise at the sight of him walking into the front shop.

"O Andrew, how glad I am! You have heard the good news? Ma! ma! here is Andrew come back!"

Andrew stood gravely smiling, but somewhat bewildered, as mother and daughter greeted and congratulated him. He did not know what Phronie meant by the good news.

"Has nobody told you, or haven't you seen it in the papers?" Mrs. Wilbur inquired. "How that money has been found?"

Thinking only of Nathan Petridge's money, Andrew was confused, wondering if more hidden treasures had been discovered in the old house on the hill.

"And how Lem has owned up that he and the Burge boys took it from you?" Phronie went on. "Don't you know?"

"I know it now for the first time," said Andrew; "though I suspected it before. I saw the Burges ripping the old house to pieces,

as I came by. How happens it they are at large?"

"Lem claimed that it wasn't meant for a robbery; and, as he owned up to everything, we couldn't make up our minds to have them all arrested," Mrs. Wilbur explained. "It was in the papers, though, and I thought that must be what brought you back."

"No," said Andrew, not half so much elated by his vindication as might have been expected; "I've come to town on other business, and I couldn't help looking in."

He was interrupted by a strong hand grasping his and squeezing it until he almost cried out with the pain. It was the baker's; Mr. Wilbur had left his work and rushed into the front shop, stopping only to give his fingers a preparatory wipe on his apron, the minute he heard of Andrew's arrival.

"I haven't a word to say!" he exclaimed, with more cordiality than Andrew had ever seen in him before. "It was a shocking mistake. But 'all's well that ends well.' Your place is waiting for you, and I'm glad enough to see you back."

"I didn't come for that," said Andrew, his strangeness of manner yielding to the grateful emotions that warmed his heart and brimmed his eyes.

The family made him stay for supper; and at table, with closed doors, he related the thrilling story of the cane. Even the baker, who had always before treated him with more or less surliness, listened with intense sympathy, and watched with eager curiosity while he unscrewed the head and showed how the papers were concealed.

"I had heard before of a miser's keeping his money in his cane," he said; "and I wonder I never suspected the old man. His little journeys away from home, I see now, were to get his coupons cashed, or a bill changed."

He had to pass the cane over the table to the baker, who examined it with astonishment and admiration.

"Now I must tell you," said Andrew, "what troubles me."

"Troubles you!" laughed Phronie. "I should not think anything need trouble you, after this!"

"But there does," said Andrew, carefully screwing the cane together again. "I want advice; I want to know what to do with this property."

"That's right! that's right!" said the baker, rubbing his hands and smiling blandly at their guest. Nobody was eating a mouthful. "You are not going to let a little money turn your head. You are not such a boy as that."

"Of course you won't spend it foolishly," said Mrs. Wilbur.



"MA! MA! HERE IS ANDREW COME BACK!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HE IS FAVORED WITH SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE BY THE FRIENDLY BAKER, BUT OBSTINATELY FOLLOWS THE COUNSEL OF A VERY DIFFERENT MONITOR.

WITH a curious expression, as if the talk were taking a different direction from what he expected, Andrew was about to reply, when the baker, having taken up his knife and fork and dropped them again, went on,—

“ You see what our business is here, and how much it can be increased. I’d like to enlarge the bakery, build one or two more ovens, and run two or three or half-a-dozen more wagons. It could be done as well as not. And I’m free to tell you now, Andrew, how well adapted I think you are to the business. I never had a man — let alone boys — I liked half so well.”

“ Though it took him some time to find it out,” Phronie couldn’t help throwing in, with a laugh.

“ Now what do you say to putting your

money in here with me, having charge of the outdoor business, and sharing the profits?" cried the baker. "After due consideration. No hurry about it. Your bonds are bearing interest, and you can wait till you are a year or two older—till you are twenty-one, if you think best. But it's a good thing for a young man to have an object in view, and to work up to it. Meanwhile, the less you say about your good luck the better."

Phronie looked to see Andrew's face light up at what she regarded as a splendid proposal. But his countenance was disturbed.

"You are very kind," he said. "I see how much your business can be increased, and I know I should like to have charge of the outdoor part of it. But this isn't just the matter I wanted advice about."

His face was flushed, his features worked, he passed his hand across his brow, and went on :

"When I first discovered that money, I was in a frenzy over it. Mr. Petridge had told me I should be his heir, and given me the cane; even Mr. Burge said I could take it. But then

I began to reflect. There was no question about the old man's insanity. Had he any right to dispose of his property? To prevent that, Mr. Burge had been made his guardian. I felt at first that I had got only what belonged to me. But does it belong to me?"

"In one sense it does," Mr. Wilbur replied. "Though I saw at once, if the thing was known, you might have trouble."

"Certainly, the Burges have no right to it," put in Mrs. Wilbur.

"It would be the worst thing in the world for those dissipated boys," added Phronie. "I think it has got into just the right hands, Andrew."

"I said all that, when I tried to reason myself out of my scruples," Andrew replied. "But there was something in me that wouldn't be satisfied. I thought I would go on to Ohio, and consult my friends there. But I knew just what my brother-in-law would say; he would say, keep it, and perhaps claim a share of it for my sister. He's just that sort of man. I asked myself, 'What would my mother say?'"

Andrew's voice was broken, and his face showed how deeply he had pondered the problem, and how much it had caused him to suffer before he made his decision.

"I knew too well what she would say," he went on, after a pause. "I was in Albany. I started twice to take the train for the West; but I couldn't do it. I was more miserable than I was before I found the money; and that convinced me I never could enjoy it. I said to myself that I was a fool to feel so about it, and I don't know but I am. But something controlled me; I had to come back."

Mrs. Wilbur wiped a tear from her eye. Phronie watched him with intense sympathy and wondering interest, laughing with bright tears in her eyes, as he told his strange story. Even the practical baker had to respect sentiments uttered with such deep and sincere feeling.

Mr. Wilbur ate very fast for a moment, then threw down his knife again, and asked: "And what was your idea in coming back?"

"I hardly know," Andrew replied, his voice

and countenance clearing, now that he had made his confession. "I felt that I must tell somebody who would take a disinterested view of the matter and give me good counsel. I ought to consult a lawyer; but I wanted to be sure of getting an honest lawyer, and I didn't know where to go for one. Then it occurred to me that Mrs. Wilbur might tell me."

"I believe you are right, Andrew," Mrs. Wilbur declared. "And we know just the man for you—Lawyer Casey. Don't you think so, Thomas?"

"If he's to consult a lawyer at all," her husband replied,— "why, yes, Casey will be a good man. But I hardly see the use."

"That's what I think now!" Andrew exclaimed, a smile breaking through all clouds and lighting up his face. "Merely putting the matter into words has settled it in my own mind. It is all clear to me now, and I feel perfectly happy about it."

"That's right!" cried the baker, eagerly. "Let the lawyers slide. Say nothing outside

of this room. That's what you mean — that you'll keep the money ? ”

“ No,” Andrew answered, firmly. “ I shall give it up.”

“ If you feel so,” said Phronie, “ I suppose you must. But it seems such a pity that you can't get some good of it.”

“ I've got good of it already,” he replied, cheerfully. “ If I hadn't found it, I shouldn't have come back here, and I might never have known that that other trouble was cleared up.”

“ The robbery ? ” Mrs. Wilbur exclaimed. “ The idea of anybody's even suspecting you ! ”

Her husband had no taste for that topic ; he hastened to change it.

“ If your mind is really made up,” he said, “ then the best thing you can do is to consult Mr. Casey. Something is due you for all you did for Mr. Petridge the year you lived with him ; for your trouble in bringing back the money ; and for the assault on you by his boys.”

## CHAPTER XXX.

WHICH IS SHORT, AND LIKEWISE CONCLUSIVE.

ANDREW had not thought of putting in any claims of that sort; and yet if he could openly and honorably keep any part of the money, there seemed to be no reason why he should not do so. He accordingly went that very evening with Mr. Wilbur, to call on the lawyer at his house, and put the management of the whole affair into Mr. Casey's hands.

The next day he returned to his humble occupation of driving a baker's wagon, and was so happy in it that he cared little what sort of a settlement was made with Nathan's heirs. He was at first even a trifle disappointed when he learned how much that shrewd lawyer had succeeded in saving for him out of the contents of the cane.

"There's such a satisfaction," he said to Phronie, "in earning myself every dollar I have,

and building up my fortune, if I ever have one, solid and sound from the bottom, and biding my time, that I'm almost sorry to owe anything to what seems mere luck. However," he added, with a laugh, "I shouldn't wonder if the five hundred will do me about as much good as it would most young fellows of our acquaintance. What do you think, Phronie?"

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